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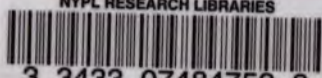
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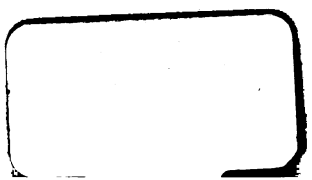


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THE SHINING ADVENTURE



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BY
J. A. BARNET



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BY
DANA BURNET

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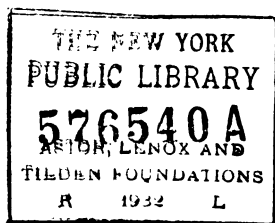
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DANA BURNET

THE SHINING ADVENTURE
POEMS

HARPER & BROTHERS, NEW YORK

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TO
MY WIFE
MARGUERITE DUMARY BURNET

31X685

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I

DECLINE AND FALL OF BLUE PIG.—HOW A MORN-
ING CANTER MAY BE OF CONSIDERABLE
ASSISTANCE TO FATE.—BEGIN-
NINGS OF EMPIRE

THE blue-china Pig would *not* come down of his own accord. That was a settled thing. He dwelt in peace and security upon the Playroom shelf, a supercilious smile curving his lips, a stubborn kink in his blue-china tail. Since the beginning of the world, or thereabouts, the Pig had hovered at this perilous height—quite near the edge, yet never falling off; he was that kind of a Pig.

The King stood before the mantelpiece, hands in his pockets, reflecting upon the implacability of fate. Some five feet above the floor hovered

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an eminently breakable Pig. Below stretched a square of hard white tile, as though by especial arrangement with destiny. But the Pig, smug creature, would not come down. Secure in the knowledge of his intrinsic sacredness, he remained aloof, impudently smiling, a brute and a temptation.

Now, to lay hands upon the Pig, even in friendship, was sternly prohibited, for beneath his clever disguise as a plaything the Pig was a Penny Bank. Into him, every Christmas and birthday, had gone solemn consignments of new pennies which were to be the King's fortune when he grew up. But growing up was an interminable process and the King wanted his fortune immediately. He wanted it for a Particular Purpose.

The Particular Purpose lay directly beneath the King's window, and a most glorious green Purpose it was! Within the borders of it tall trees lifted their plumed shakos to the sun. Dappled shadows lay upon the new, sweet grass. Flowers bloomed along the paths, a fountain tossed endless jewels into the air, birds sang in the lilac-bushes, caterpillars crawled upon the leaves. There were delightful worms. . . .

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And the name of this Particular Purpose was the Park.

Now there are many parks scattered across the world—or so I have been told by loquacious travelers—but the King's Park contained a feature that set it quite apart from the others. This feature was an iron fence that went marching about its edges with pointed spears, sternly repelling unlicensed invasion. Four gates opened in the fence, but the gates were relentless unless one chanced to be possessed of the key to them. Altogether these gates separated the world into two distinct classes—those who had keys and those who had not.

Those who had keys were perfectly satisfied with the arrangement. But those who had no keys were strangely restless about it. On warm summer days the keyless ones would come fluttering to the fence, like moths to a candle; ragged beggarmen with fever-haunted faces; old women who stopped to smell the flowers and the soil; small children from the Unmentionable Avenues who pressed white faces against the iron and cooled their eyes with the green. Often the King, playing in the Park, had glanced up to see these Other Children staring at him with wistful eyes, and always it

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had troubled him. Once he had opened the gate for one of them—a little lame girl with a crutch—but Thelma, the governess, had shrieked and snatched him away from the small pariah; then had taken him home and washed him thoroughly with an evil-smelling soap. Despite this depressing experience, the King had continued to entertain a forbidden sympathy for the Other Children. . . .

One day it occurred to him that if he owned the Park he could do with it as he liked. He could admit whom he wished and exclude whom he would. This was a pleasing and revolutionary idea, which he soon elaborated into a course of action. As far as the King could observe the Park belonged to a very impressive Policeman, who patrolled the sidewalks about its frontiers, and a very old and bent Gardener, who patted down the flower-beds and said, "There now!" when the babies fell into the fountain. Doubtless these two would part with their possessions fast enough, once the music of the King's fortune had been wafted to their ears. . . . The only difficulty, then, was to secure the fortune.

It was obvious that the Pig would not fall off the shelf from mere motives of politeness. Pigs are notoriously lacking in the finer sensi-

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bilities. Would fate, then, take a hand in the matter? The King had waited almost a week and fate had not yet come to his assistance. There remained only the last resort of his going to the assistance of fate.

With an air of determination, not unmixed with regret, the King strode to the window and unhitched a noble Arab rocking-horse from its grazing-rope, the curtain-string. Dragging the faithful steed to a position facing the shelf, he leaped into the saddle and began to rock furiously. At each movement forward and back a slight quiver shook the room from floor to ceiling. This quiver was communicated to the shelf, and from the shelf to the blue Pig. We will not go into the ethics of the matter. To all intents and purposes the King was merely out for a morning's canter. As a matter of fact he was giving first aid to fate.

The Arab increased its pace. The room trembled. The blue Pig began to dance upon the very edge of doom. Now one cloven hoof was poised over the brink. Still the false plaything danced upon three legs. Faster sped the Arab. More briskly danced the Pig. The King closed his eyes.

Crash!

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The morning's canter came to an abrupt close. Flinging himself out of the saddle, the King stood a moment, listening for possible footsteps in the hall. But strange and unusual noises were the rule, not the exception, in that house. Thelma, it is true, ordinarily would have investigated so thunderous a sound. But Thelma, as shortly will be explained, was occupied upon this morning with weightier matters.

Vivid as had been the King's imaginings of the blue Pig's fall, the fact of it was even more glorious. A golden deluge had covered the tile and overflowed upon the adjacent carpet. Bits of blue china, indeed, were discovered as far as the wash-stand. The Pig's head, snapped off short behind the ears, continued to smile faintly from the ruins. But now his smile was one of pained surprise.

Carefully the King gathered up the telltale fragments of the shattered institution. These he dropped into a waste-basket, covering them with odds and ends. Then emptying a red marble-bag of its native contents, the King sat down to count his treasure.

Immediately he encountered new difficulties. He could only count up to ten. The most prac-

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tised banker, it must be admitted, would have been handicapped in such a circumstance. So the King, perceiving his mathematical shortcomings to be insurmountable, poured the pennies by handfuls into the marble-bag. This proved in the end to be far more satisfactory than counting his wealth, for now he judged by the clink of it (as many another man of fortune has done). Probably if he had counted it in actual figures, the treasure would have amounted to dollars disappointingly few. But judged by the clink, it ran well up into the thousands, being comparable, indeed, to the fortunes of the Kings in the Fairy-tales. It would buy the Park, without the slightest doubt, and leave something over for sweets beside.

Going to the window, the King looked down upon the green country with a thrill of proprietorship. . . . Mist lay upon all the Park, for it was early morning, and the crowding city walls were blotted and smoothed away. Towers of silver lifted fairy minarets to the smoked copper of the sun. The air was like a window-pane that one has breathed upon, and afterward traced with all manner of whimsical architecture. Under the guise of the mist the

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little green country took on the semblance of a land from Grimm. . . .

He had been without a kingdom until this day (if you except the vague territory of Dreams that lies in the shadows back of Bed-time), and now, at last, he was to come into his rightful inheritance. He would own all the land inside the iron fence, and have sovereign power over the four gates, so that none might enter without his royal sanction. And he would possess by divine right the fairy castles of the mist that stood so faintly against the sky before the sun had topped the roofs. It was the Gardener who built these castles, busy himself as he would with his sly pretense of the flower-beds! There was magic in his gnarled, earth-stained old hands, and never a doubt of it! Once, indeed, the King had caught him stepping out of Grimm's fairy-tales, a fatigued-looking broomstick in his hand. (That was very, very early in the morning, on the path that leads back from the territory of Dreams.) Nevertheless, it was a certain thing that the Gardener had a gift for magic. No man as twisted as he ever lived outside a Fairy-tale. Moreover, the babies trusted him implicitly, and proved it by not falling in the fountain

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except when he was near. These babies would be permitted to remain in the Park upon condition that they did not grow up to be more than eight. For that was the King's own age and it would be *lèse-majesté* to outgrow the King.

I have said that the King was eight. To be strictly truthful, he was eight going on nine, which is something in the way of a departure, as Kings go. Ordinary Kings are bearded gentlemen who ride in open carriages through miles of illustrated gazettes and have one plumed hat in common, which they hold gracefully lifted above their slightly bald heads. . . .

But my King was not of the ordinary. To begin with, he was a Charity Child, and his immediate ancestry was not above reproach. His father, poor gentleman, had been a Socialist; and had been shot by a militiaman of nervous temperament during a strike riot in Jersey. His mother had been a lady, but her early death had left the King quite at the mercy of Socialism, which, to Aunt Philomena's mind, was something vaguely connected with soiled linen and bombs in the cathedral. Aunt Philomena, indeed, had deferred legal adoption of the King because of the regrettable Socialistic forebear.

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If the King turned out a gentleman, all well and good. But if he turned out a Socialist—!

She had done her best to make the King a little gentleman, and he had fought the process, step by step, with all the strength and ability that was in him. He had fought Manners, which consisted chiefly of Starch-Collars on Sunday and saying "Sir" to the Rector. He had fought Thelma, the governess, with her English accent and her tyrannical insistence upon Soap Behind the Ears. He had begged to be allowed to attend a public school. When this request was denied he had turned stubborn, refusing point-blank to harass his mind with the principal products of Uruguay and What is a Delta? So Miss Philomena had substituted a course of physical culture instead: dumb-bells, exercising-pulleys, and punching-bag. Whereupon the King, viewing these innovations with delight, had promptly announced his intention of becoming a prize-fighter. Inwardly Miss Philomena had shuddered to her soul; but she had not ventured to remove the beloved paraphernalia. Already she had begun to avoid conflicts with the King's Temper.

Miss Philomena Van Zandt, the Queen Regent, was a beautiful woman grown cold with

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worship of respectability. She was pure patrician, with wealth enough to make her ancient Knickerbocker name almost unnecessary, and because the world in which she found herself was raucously and insistently democratic the good lady suffered not a little. She had reached the unmentionable side of thirty in virginal safety, and, being without immediate family, had found herself in a state of mental and spiritual idleness which had proved well-nigh unbearable. Consequently she had turned to that inevitable employment of her kind, the uplift of the Poor. In this occupation she had received the somewhat mocking encouragement of Dr. Peter MacLean, a grim-faced surgeon of national reputation, who had been mildly in love with Miss Philomena for the past ten years. Let it be said in the Doctor's favor that Miss Philomena would have married him long since had she been quite sure that he was not a pagan.

The Doctor was also one of the first authorities in the country upon social evils and their remedies; and he was rude enough to laugh uproariously when Miss Philomena toured the East Side in her electric brougham (with a liveried chauffeur and footman) to distribute pocket Bibles to the Poor. . . . This rudeness

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upon the Doctor's part, however, only served to stiffen Miss Philomena's resolutions. She would uplift the masses, now, whether or no! In this spirit of determined benevolence she joined charity after charity, paid initiation-fee after initiation fee, accepted office after office. Once started, she could not resist the temptation of joining just one more. The Doctor called her numerous honors "The Collection," and predicted that she would take up butterflies at fifty—which drove her to new heights of philanthropic endeavor. By means of her innumerable connections, her many offices, her countless memberships, she contrived eventually to bring together the most important societies throughout the East, and to form them into a single large body known as the United Charities. This body promptly elected Miss Philomena its president. As such, she presided over the annual Conference, an event with which our story is directly concerned.

The King was one of Miss Philomena's Lesser Charities. She had taken him in a weak moment from a bald charity parlor, had washed him from head to foot; and then had placed him in a window to be the King. But she had forgotten to provide him with a kingdom, which

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was a grave omission for a Queen Regent. So he was forced to make his plans alone, aided only by an old fairy-story or two, and the guidance of those dim adventures in the Dreams. . . .

The Play-room, as the King turned from the window, seemed suddenly to have shrunk in size. He had outgrown it for good and all. Yet its familiar objects tugged mightily at his heart. From every nook and corner (for it is in the corners that the heartaches lie) some well-loved treasure sent forth a dumb appeal to the King. A battalion of Christmas Soldiers presented arms along the wall, begging him not to forget their glorious past record. The noble Arab eyed him with a gentle reproach. A glittering Tin Sword swung from the bedpost (for security against burglars in the night), mute reminder of battles lost and won. The sad part about empire-building is that one must leave so much behind. . . .

It came down at last to blade and specie, the bones of every expeditionary venture. Buckling the Tin Sword about his waist and thrusting the richly jingling marble-bag into his trousers pocket, the King walked again to the window, intentionally avoiding the eyes of the Christmas Soldiers. Behind him the whole

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world of his Things whispered and pleaded in the silent heart language of the Play-room. Well they knew that he intended to run away!

But below his window tall trees nodded in the wind, birds sang in the lilac-bushes, while the sun, brushing aside the cobwebs of the mist, flung great splashes of golden light across the grass. . . . And there, at the turn of the fence, one of the Other Children clung with futile hands, staring wistfully in at the forbidden kingdom.

To-morrow all would be changed. The gates would be flung wide. The Other Children, an uncountable ragged host of them, would come pouring in to dance upon the grass, to play along the walks, to cool their parched lips at the waters of the fountain. . . .

To-morrow!

II

IN WHICH A BISHOP IS BOTH FAT AND UNEXPECTED.—IDEAS ON EXODUS.—HAPPY SOLUTION OF A DELICATE DILEMMA

MISS PHILOMENA VAN ZANDT, of Gramercy Park North, sat reading a telegram in her staid ancestral library. There was a well-bred frown furrowing the lady's smooth brow, a delicate shadow of perplexity clouding her beautiful, if somewhat aristocratic countenance. Through the refining medium of a gold lorgnette she peered at the blatant yellow slip, which had arrived, with characteristic ruthlessness, at seven o'clock of the morning. The telegram bore the signature of the most famous Bishop in the East:

Find myself unexpectedly at liberty to attend conference will arrive 9.30 grand central

E. G. Trippit

Now I dare say destiny holds no more delicate dilemma than an unexpected Bishop. A Bishop, doubtless, may do many things denied to ordinary mortals, but he should never do them un-

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expectedly. He should never preach unexpected sermons, for example, or entertain unexpected ideas about his profession. The Bishop in the present instance was not only unexpected; he was also corpulent to a degree not often attained in these days of a lean clergy.

For upward of a month past Miss Philomena had been angling, in a perfectly well-bred way, for this same Bishop Trippit. She wanted him for her Conference. He was a very important Bishop, who had received an amazing amount of publicity because of his revolutionary ideas about cities. The Right Reverend Doctor Trippit believed, and proclaimed in no uncertain tones from the pulpit, that cities were entirely too crowded for any good to come of them. He exhorted the populations of large cities to move out into the adjacent country and figuratively hurled himself at the head of the procession. If an X-ray photograph could have been taken of the Bishop's mind during one of these sermons on exodus, no doubt it would have proved a facsimile of Moses leading the children of Israel out of Egypt. Secretly, the Bishop considered himself a modern Moses. He had caught the notion from a newspaper article on himself.

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The annual Conference of United Charities was held every June in the president's staid, brownstone house in Gramercy Park North. Thither, like pilgrims traveling to Mecca, flocked the representatives of the various charities throughout the East. Several of the most socially acceptable of these out-of-town pilgrims it was Miss Philomena's custom to entertain beneath her own roof. To this end, for days before the event, she juggled beds and marshaled spare rooms, isolated a fussy *grande dame* here, or doubled a pair of callous gentlemen social workers there. But one cannot double a Bishop with impunity, especially a corpulent Bishop. Miss Philomena did not pause to ask herself whether an undivided room was vital to the Bishop as a Bishop, or to the Bishop as a fat man. She only realized that it was vital.

Drawing a sheet of paper from her mahogany writing-desk (an old secretary descended from Dutch Colonial days), Miss Philomena wrote as follows:

Guest Room—Rev. John Ramie, Boston.

White Room—Mr. Lawrence Love, Philadelphia; Mr. Will Winberry, Providence.

Spare Room—Mrs. T. Herbert Horn, Brooklyn; Miss E. Jones, Cleveland.

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"And that," murmured Miss Philomena, "leaves the Bishop and me." She glanced at the small French clock upon her desk. It was half past eight. Suddenly the good lady gave a little start and a sigh, as one who stumbles upon the answer to a riddle. Then she put down, with a flourish:

My Room—Bishop Trippit.
The Boy's Room—Self.

"There!" exclaimed Miss Philomena, "that's done." She rose and pulled a bell-cord of ancient lineage. A no less ancient man-servant answered the ring.

"Please telephone for the brougham, Simms."

"Very good, ma'am."

"Have my things moved into the Play-room and send Thelma to me at once."

"Very good, ma'am."

When Simms had departed Miss Philomena permitted herself the luxury of a self-congratulatory smile. She had solved the delicate dilemma of the unexpected Bishop quite happily, with benefit to all concerned. She had decided to send Thelma and the boy to the Holland House for a day or two—until the Conference had run its course. That solved

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the Bishop, gave her an extra bedroom, and not the least important result, effectually disposed of a Lesser Charity who, upon occasion, was disturbingly imbued with a Temper.

The Queen Regent had done her best by the King in the strict matter of duty. But she had made that one fatal mistake of not providing him with a kingdom. Of course, the Play-room did well enough in its way, but it was only four walls and a window at best; and one cannot be long content with that if one has ever trod the open country of the Dreams. . . . Miss Philomena had forgotten that every child is a King at eight going on nine, and because of that forgetting she had been barred from all the glorious Land of Pretending—which, I think, is the saddest thing that can happen to any woman who plays at being a mother.

Five years before, at the time when Miss Philomena's charitable impulse was sweeping her forward in an irresistible tide of philanthropic fever, a strike occurred in a mill-town in New Jersey. Feeling ran high and the militia was called out. Among the leaders of the strike was a young Socialist of unimportant name who had traveled to the afflicted region simply because he believed that there was a

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principle involved. He was one of those ridiculous persons who believe in principles.

There came a day when the tension snapped. The strikers, urged on by their women, went forward in a snarling battalion to meet the khaki-clad line of Vested Authority. . . . The story was that the young Socialist ran out in front of his people to prevent their firing, only to encounter destiny in the shape of a bullet from the rifle of a kneeling boy militiaman who had grown nervous with gazing at the black faces before him.

Thus it fell out that the young Socialist's only son and heir, aged three, arrived in New York with a tag around his neck and sat with other starvelings of the strike, in an eleemosynary parlor. There Miss Philomena, coming to distribute Bibles to the orphans, had found him, his chubby fist in his mouth. And the uplift being strong upon her, she had taken him home and mothered him desperately for a while. In those early days the Queen Regent was wont to stand in the door and look with a certain wistfulness upon the pageants of the King's invention. Occasionally she became graciously a part of the Play-room affairs and made herself into hostile castles, attacking ogres, and

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military objectives at will. But later, when the child outgrew his first charm and became a complex little body with flashing blue eyes and a tendency toward Temper, Miss Philomena turned him over to an English governess and went back to the deserving Poor. It is always so much easier to uplift the world beyond one's gates! (It was the Doctor who said this, with his most unbearable smile, and Miss Philomena had not yet forgiven him. . . .)

So the woman who had played at being a mother went her way with an armful of Bibles. But the King, having inherited from his disreputable dead father the divine prerogative of Dreams, gathered up his sword and his treasure and fared forth upon a shining adventure.

III

'ENRY, AN EPISODE.—HOW THE FRONT STAIRS MAY NOT KNOW WHAT THE BACK STAIRS ARE DOING

THE history of empire is a chronicle of tremendous trifles. The episode of Thelma, the governess, is no more than an incident in our story. But upon it hangs the very life of the King's adventure.

On this morning, as has been hinted, Thelma was concerned with matters more weighty than the investigation of that mysterious crash in the Play-room. Her room being almost directly across the hall, she could not help but hear the detonations of the blue Pig's decline and fall. But her mind had refused to accept what her ears recorded. Her mind was entirely occupied with 'Enry.

'Enry was a Taxicab Man; not Thelma's equal in education or pronunciation, perhaps, but a strong, handsome, masterful fellow, for all that. Thelma was engaged to marry 'Enry.

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Furthermore, she was engaged to elope with him.

In explanation of this circumstance let us consider the fact that 'Enry was a Socialist. Not the sort of Socialist who believes in principles, mind you. 'Enry believed in the abrogation of principles, especially in the case of other people's property. 'Enry felt an enormous, an overweening contempt for other people's property. He believed in Equal Distribution.

That is why at the bottom of Thelma's already neatly packed hand-bag there reposed a select consignment of Miss Philomena's best table-linen, a bit of flat silver, a real lace centerpiece, and a small diamond pin. Yet this was no bold larceny. If you grasp 'Enry's point of view, the diamond pin, for instance, was only a generous wedding-present from Miss Philomena to the bride.

Yet 'Enry had insisted upon elopement. Persons who have not been consulted about the distribution of their property are prone to overlook the Socialistic point of view. They are prone to telephone for the police. And the police are notoriously impervious to reason.

Hence Thelma, her bag packed, her hat laid

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out upon the bed, sat near the window this certain June morning, awaiting the arrival of 'Enry's taxicab at the corner, half a block away. . . .

Suddenly footsteps sounded in the hall. There came a knock at her door, and then the wooden voice of Simms.

"You're wanted, miss. In the library, miss."

"Very well, Simms. Say that I'll be down directly."

A short time later, having concealed her tell-tale bag beneath the bed, Thelma descended the stairs to the library. Miss Philomena, dressed for the street, stood buttoning a pair of long white gloves, near the window. Through the parted curtains the governess could see the maroon-colored electric brougham standing at the curb, with Barker, the stout driver, and Greene, the slim footman, seated in liveried splendor upon the box. Her heart leaped within her.

"Thelma," said Miss Philomena, "I have decided to send you and the boy to the Holland House for a day or two. You may telephone for rooms, if you like. I am going to the station to meet a—a guest. I should prefer that you leave before I return."

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Then Thelma, with the image of 'Enry in her soul, almost laughed aloud.

"I will leave before you return," said Thelma.

It was very still on the stairs. By that I mean both the front and the back stairs, though, if the truth were known, the back stairs had a trifle the better of it in the matter of quiet.

Down the back stairs stole Thelma, the governess, hat in one hand, bag in the other, like a villainess in a play. (And life is so seldom like a play!)

"If I can only escape the boy!" exclaimed Thelma, beneath her breath.

Very cautiously down the front stairs crept the King, the Tin Sword at his side, the marble-bag stuffed into his pocket. At every step the pennies jingled musically, clutch them as he would. Because of the pennies the front stairs were at some disadvantage in the contest of silence.

From his window the King had seen Miss Philomena drive away in the brougham, the familiar figures of Barker and Greene perched aloft, and he knew there was no danger from that quarter. (How strangely altered were the

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circumstances under which he next saw the maroon-colored brougham!)

"If Thelma doesn't hear me!" thought the King, taking a fresh grasp on his money-bag. And so, as in many another respectable house, the front stairs did not know what the back stairs were doing. . . .

With a muttered prayer to whatever Socialistic Diety she worshiped, Thelma, the governess, reached the bottom step and made ready for a dash through the butler's pantry. There, as luck would have it, she bumped fairly into Simms. Uttering a mouse-like squeak, she brushed past him, flung herself against the back door, and so out into the June morning. . . .

'Enry was waiting at the corner, lolling beside his pirate craft and twisting his mustaches, which were well worth twisting. But when he saw Thelma and the hand-bag, the one bursting with love, excitement, and pride, the other with evidences of Equal Distribution, 'Enry leaped to the wheel of his bark, cast open the cabin door, and motioned for his lady to hasten aboard.

"We'd best be gettin' along out o' this," said 'Enry.

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Thelma laughed hysterically. There was a whirr of machinery, a groaning of shifted gears, a triumphant bleat of the horn, and 'Enry hauled away for parts unknown. Up the street they went at a rocking pace, around a corner with a sudden twist—and so out of our story. Peace and prosperity (other people's) go with them!

At last the King found himself in the lower hall, facing the solemn crisis of the front door. Over this portal gleamed a wide strip of stained glass, through which the summer sunshine poured in floods of rainbow-colored light. It was the glory of his kingdom, shining from afar!

With throbbing pulses the King put out his hand and took the Key to the Park from its place beside the door. It was a very small key, indeed, to be causing such a difference in the world! Hitherto it had possessed something of the sacredness of the blue Pig; but tradition once defied is soon shattered.

Thrusting the key into his pocket, the King laid hold upon the door-knob. A twist and a tug and he was out—out into a universe of hurrying people, busy streets, unceasing sounds.

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But yonder the Park lay, cool and green under the guard of its marching iron pickets, and there, standing near the gate, was the huge Policeman, his buttons winking gloriously in the sun!

IV

“HOW MANY PENNIES TO BUY A PARK?”

THE back of a policeman is the most terrifying thing in the world.

I state this fact boldly, having made an exhaustive study of policemen, front and back. My conclusions are that the front of a policeman may include a very jovial, round face and a bit of neighborly gossip. But the back is the Judgment Day, done in dark blue.

Thoughts similar to these flashed through the King's mind as he stood gazing up at the broad back of the Park Policeman. In the name of all adventure, how did one attract the attention of such a magnificent huge mass of blue without bringing the whole weight of the law down on one? What would happen if one pulled his coat-tails? Immediate arrest and conviction, no doubt. Fancy pulling a policeman's coat-tails!

“S-say!”

Not a response. Not a movement. Not a quiver of the blue mass.

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"Sir," added the King, after a moment's pause. This was Manners, and if the Queen Regent's theories held water, should have produced a result. There was not the slightest apparent effect. Manners were a shibboleth well discarded.

The King determined upon a strategic flank movement. Grasping the Tin Sword for greater assurance, he marched around the vast blue column of the Policeman's leg until he found himself looking up into a pair of eyes as bright and twinkling as their owner's buttons.

"Hello!" said the King; then, blurting it all out at once, he asked, "Is this your Park?"

The Park Policeman, bending down until the front of him was all wrinkles, looked solemnly into his small questioner's face.

"Of course 'tis mine! And would ye be wantin' to borry it of me the day?"

"I want to buy it from you," said the King, and jingled his pennies with a sly hand.

The Policeman straightened up again, so that now the front of him was a vast billowing ocean of blue.

"Buy it from me! Sure, what would ye be doin' with such an extensive bit of property?"

"I want it to play in," said the King.

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The Policeman removed his cap—a tremendously impressive ceremony—and scratched his head with a crooked forefinger.

“I have the Park for borryin’ purposes only,” said the Policeman. “If ye want to buy outright, ye’ll have to speak to the Gardener yonder. An’ don’t let him overcharge ye for it. ’Tis only imitation country, at best.”

“I won’t,” replied the King, and would have added “Thank you,” but for the fact that it was Manners. So he put out his hand instead.

The Policeman shook it heartily.

“Lad,” said he, “I disremember how long it has been since I wanted a whole Park to play in, but anyways, I wish ye the best of luck.”

Which quite bears out my conclusions as to the front of a policeman.

With this fair benediction in his ears, the King went on to the gate, and, drawing the brass key from his pocket, managed, after some fumbling, to get it fairly into the lock. The gate opened easily. (Most gates do, if you have the right keys to them.)

The Gardener was working in a clump of green bushes at the far end of the Park. His head, as he bent to pull a weed, was within a few inches of the ground. He looked like a

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curious tree which in the middle of its growth had been warped inexplicably back to earth. As the King approached the Gardener suddenly thrust his head forward somewhat in the manner of a turtle, showing a face as wrinkled as a shriveled leaf. The eyes in this face were a faded blue and the light in them was very vague and flickering. You understood at a glance that the Gardener was only a child, excessively burdened with years.

"Gardener," said the King, in the familiar tones of old acquaintanceship, "I want to buy the Park."

"Do ye, now?" chuckled the other, straightening his strangely bent torso by a series of jerks. "Do ye, now, Master Moneybags? And what 'll ye give me for it, since I've got it to growin' so green?"

The King drew out the marble-bag and shook it, cunningly.

"I guess there's maybe a thousand dollars in this bag," he said, peering up into the old man's face. The Gardener put his gnarled hand into the throat of the King's purse; his thin, brown fingers twisted this way and that among the jingling pieces, then the hand was withdrawn, clutching a small fortune in pennies.

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"There now!" said the Gardener, blinking at the wealth in his palm, "aren't they bright uns, though?"

"They've never been used, or anything," said the King.

The Gardener gave his body another sharp jerk upward. It was his habit thus to raise and lower himself by degrees.

"Well, now," said he, putting on a look that was intended to be as wise as an owl's, "let's get to our bargainin'. How many pennies to buy a Park? Ye might make a song of it. Mother Goosie rhyme—or somethin' o' the sort. I dun'no'." He shook his sparse locks sadly, his lips trembling over the contemplated refrain.

"I'll give you all you've got in your hand," said the King.

"Ye might make a song of it," muttered the Gardener, staring with his old, old eyes at the King. The latter waited patiently. He realized that the Gardener was having one of his queer spells, and would be over it directly.

"Yes," whispered the aged man, stirring the bright pieces in his hand, "there's singin' there, if ye've got the ear for it. Mother Goosie rhyme—I dun'no'." He cupped his hands together,

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and, holding the pennies to his ear, shook them gently. "Ye could dance to that. Ye could dance and be happy! That's better than buyin' sillies with it—"

Smiling feebly, he poured the pennies back into the bag.

"Won't you sell me the Park?" cried the King in dismay.

"What do ye want of it?" queried the Gardener, and straightway thought this such a clever parry that he repeated it over and over again. "What do ye want of it? What do ye want of it?"

The King replied simply that he wanted it for a kingdom. He explained how the world was divided into those who had keys and those who had not, and how it did not seem fair to those who had not. And then he told about the Other Children who laid their cheeks against the iron and looked so wistfully at the green. The Gardener nodded at this.

"I've seen 'em," he quavered, "hangin' to the fence like brown moths. Not allowed. No, sir! That's the word for them. Not allowed. Poor rats!"

"I'll let 'em in," said the King.

"Well, now," said the Gardener, his eyes

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brightening suddenly, "there's a fine thing. Maybe ye would . . . I dun'no'."

"Now will you sell me the Park?"

The Gardener did not seem to hear. Placing his hands on his hips, he straightened up, groaning, and glanced at the blue sky overhead.

"Not allowed," he mumbled. "Poor rats! I must throw in a bit of heaven for 'em, too. *That 'll be a bargain.*"

"How much will you sell it for?"

"For a song," said the Gardener, suddenly, and then fell to laughing at his own wit, and from laughing went to coughing, and from coughing to hard breathing, and from hard breathing to easy breathing, and so back to his natural pipe again.

"We must have it accordin' to law," said the Gardener. "Ye must pay me a penny down, to bind the bargain, or the title won't pass. Ye have to be clever about your titles in *this* world, I tell ye!"

So the King paid his penny down, and the Gardener, doubling himself by swift jerks, scooped a handful of loose earth from one of the flower-beds; after which he snipped a blossoming twig from a bush near by. Then he bade the King to hold out his hands, and, when this

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was accomplished, dropped the twig in them, pouring the loose earth over it and reciting, in a childish singsong:

“By this bond I give to thee
Brown earth and growing tree—”

Thus the King was made master of the green country at a price which dimly approximated a song, and the Gardener (immeasurably delighted over the small ceremony) pocketed his penny with a prodigious wink at the sky. . . .

“I’m going to find the Other Children now,” said the King, “but I’ll come back to-morrow.”

“That’s a long time off,” said the Gardener, shaking his head, “but ye can’t hurry it. There now! I must get on at the weeds. Don’t forget you’re to let ’em in. Not allowed! Poor rats!”

“I won’t forget,” answered the King as he turned back along the path to the gate.

V

IN WHICH THE KING MEETS ONE FRIEND AND DIVERS FOES, AND THE ENEMY IS CALLED A LIAR

THE country of the Other Children lay east of the Park, a thousand leagues by one reckoning, a few short blocks by another. Eastward, then, our tale of empire takes its way, for it was in this direction that the King traveled in search of a prospective citizenry. (No monarch is great enough to occupy his dominions alone. Deprive him of his people and he will rattle about in his possessions like a loose pea in a pod!)

So the King walked a strange street under the June sun; and that in itself was a fine adventure. Faces peered down at him from the tops of tall bodies that the King realized were grown-ups in crowds. He had never been among so many people before. It was like walking through a forest of them. Now and then he perceived in some down-turned face the faint

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wistfulness of the Not Allowed. Dimly he felt that he was drawing nearer his object, though that object was still very vague and undefined.

He crossed the first of the Unmentionable Avenues; heard the thunder of the elevated trains roaring awfully overhead; saw the wilted shops below. There was a shadow upon this highway, and a curse of noise. Yet houses stood with even front along its either edge, and in these houses humans lived with their heads thrust out of windows. . . . There was a smell of gas upon the air.

The street went on, twisted, wavered, and then took a turn for the worse. The last bit of green had vanished, the last defiant geranium had gone from the sooty window-sills. It was as though God had left this place to be built by man alone, and man had sublet to the Devil. Slovenly buildings, flecked with hopeless windows, stood beneath the brazen sky, their faces scarred by a species of fire-escape that zigzagged down the brick like tired lightning. All of these buildings were hung with innumerable varicolored garments, frankly personal and intimate, which at a distance gave them the grotesque air of being in gala attire. The banner of the slums is the blowing wash.

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A number of freebooting pushcarts lined the curb, each the center of a small and constantly shifting crowd of women either very fat or very thin, who poked their fingers into the fruits and complained conventionally of the price. Idling men with black beards and pale, foreign faces lolled at the railings of the tenements or stood in the doorways of the squalid shops. The Jew was there, in misfit clothing, with keen, small eyes and that generic nervousness which drives him in one generation from squalor to luxury. But by far the greater portion of the proletariat was playing in the dust of the gutter, whacking bits of wood through the air with improvised bats, or clawing at its casual enemies upon the littered sidewalks. Here the summer day was filled with a continuous chatter, like the loud humming of bees. An army of children ran, danced, fought, played, laughed, sobbed, shouted, fell down, got up, threw balls, rolled hoops, walked along railings, courted death, clung to life; were spanked, fed, washed, admonished, called in, called out, sent on errands, told to leave off, go on, take the baby, relinquish the baby—and, as far as possible under the circumstances, not to get themselves run over by automobiles. All this at once, you understand,

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and in tones ungoverned by the slightest embarrassment. Persons whose lives are pooled beneath a common roof soon lose the pride of individualism.

Suddenly the King turned a corner and found himself in a little pocket of a street that seemed noisier, dirtier, and more filled with children than all the other streets combined. It was the epitome of poverty, the unit of sordidness to which the rest of the slum world seemed to have been built. On the corner—admirable gateway to squalor—stood a dilapidated saloon, with a blotched sign dragging from its wall. The sign read:

O'CONNOR'S ALLEY

A little girl with a wooden crutch under her arm came slowly about the corner, hobbling directly toward the King. Her eyes—rather tragic eyes they were—moved restlessly from side to side, as though in search of some healing beauty which they could never find. Her face was of a fragile whiteness, like the face of a flower that has been long athirst. Suddenly her fluttering glance fell upon the King. She

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stopped short, her crutch squeaking along the pavement, and stared at him. At last speech came to her in the form of a peculiar question, one, indeed, which did not seem to bear upon the present situation at all.

"What 'd they do to you for lettin' me in?"

It was the small pariah for whom he had once opened the Park gate! The King stood gazing at her in unconcealed joy and delight. In this strange land she seemed the oldest and dearest of friends. . . .

"They washed me," said the King.

"Is that all?"

"With soap."

"They *chased* me," said the little lame girl, as though it was her usual fortune to be chased.

"They couldn't chase you now."

"Why not?"

Instead of replying directly the King came a pace nearer and said, in a confidential whisper:

"Want to know something?"

"Yes."

"They couldn't chase you now because I've bought the Park. It's mine."

"Over the left eye!"

"It is, too. The Gardener said so. I've got the key and everything!" To verify these

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Arcadian claims, the King drew forth the brass Key to the Park and dangled it before his old and dear friend's eyes.

"Oh!" said the little lame girl, "oh, oh!"

She drew a great shaky breath that puffed out her small person like a toy balloon.

"Couldn't they—really—chase me?"

"Of course not," said the King. "What's your name?"

"Maggie," said the lady.

"You can come and play in the Park, if you like."

"Oh! oh! oh!" cried little Maggie, for sheer happiness.

At this moment, unfortunately, a small imp with sizzling red hair, clad chiefly in a gunny-sack, shot precipitately about the corner with shrieks of joyous abandon. Coming suddenly upon the sight of the King and his first citizen, the former with hand on hilt, the latter with adoration in her eyes, the Imp halted abruptly, stared, put his fingers in his mouth, and loosed a noise which for tone and carrying power reduced his former shrieks to a mere whisper.

Immediately, as though the whistle constituted a prearranged signal, there came a quick patter of feet from the recesses of O'Connor's

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Alley. The clans of childhood hold themselves instinctively prepared to answer all alarms.

"Hey, fellers!" shrieked the Imp, dancing about with utter disregard of his precarious raiment, "looky who's flirtin' with lamey O'Connor. Tin Soldier! Ya-a! Tin Soldier! Ya-a—lamey!"

A score of throats took up the derisive cry. The King found himself quickly surrounded by a horde of small ragamuffins, from whose open mouths fell an angry buzzing, not unlike the choleric symphony of a disturbed hornets' nest. Instinctively the King retreated, until he felt the brick wall of the shabby saloon at his shoulders. There, perforce, he stood, facing the little wolves who howled about him.

The little lame girl had been swept aside by the first onrush. The King caught a last glimpse of her being rudely jostled by the throng. His Temper leaped up in him like a flame. He drew the Tin Sword from its scabbard with shaking hands.

"If you touch her I'll kill you!"

A hush fell upon the little wolves; the hush of a mob that finds itself confronted by a finer frenzy than its own. Never before had the Alley been at grips with such a cavalier.

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Then at the extreme end of the press, where the round-eyed babies peered from the arms of small, peeping mothers, a ripple began, a movement as of some authoritative person thrusting through the mob. A lane opened magically and at the far end of this lane the King saw striding toward him a boy of about his own size and age, a boy with freckled face and a stub nose, who bore himself with the dignity of a public character. In his wake, copying his every gesture, strutted the Imp of the gunny-sack.

O'Connor's Alley burst into a cheer.

"Yea-a, Mickey!"

The advancing Mickey looked neither to the right nor left. He was the acknowledged leader of the Alley, both in peace and in war. His valor and cunning were the boast of his fellows. In mischief most prolific, in battle most invincible, he ruled the Alley with an iron hand.

Majestically he strode down the lane, disdainful of the Alley's cheers, and as he came he rolled a tattered sleeve suggestively back from a scrawny arm. Behind him the Imp danced in an ecstasy of joy.

"Hit 'im in t' eye, Mickey," shrieked the Imp, brandishing an infinitesimal fist.

The great Mickey turned with dignity.

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"Beat it, youse," he said, crushingly. "This ain't no place for kids."

Momentarily the Imp subsided. Mickey continued down the lane until he stood face to face with the King. There he paused, spat impressively, and rolled up the other sleeve.

"Start somethin'!" suggested Mickey, the invincible.

The King did not reply. Something in his adversary's attitude recalled his early ambitions to be a prize-fighter. Many times, indeed, he had met the champions of fisticuff in imaginary arenas, posed as this boy was posed now. (He had always vanquished them quite easily.)

The angry buzzing of the crowd had begun again. But against his shoulders the King felt the hard wall and he was not afraid.

"Ya-a!" sneered Mickey. "Tin Soldier! What you doin' in O'Connor's Alley?"

This question, of all the questions that Mickey might have asked, was the very hardest to answer offhand. The more altruistic one's motives are, the more difficult of explanation they become.

"I am—I have come to be—the King!"

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A shout of infinite derision burst from the throng. But Mickey lifted a compelling hand. Then, in the throbbing silence, he put his leadership to the proof:

"Who's de Kink of O'Connor's Alley?"

The answer came in a shrill chorus:

"You are, Mickey!"

The great man turned to the intruder upon his domain, the pretender who had threatened his throne.

"Does your mother know you're out?" he queried, with withering contempt.

"Does yours?" asked the King, unexpectedly.

Mickey hastily invented new insults.

"I seen you over on the Avenoo," he improvised, smoothly, "playin' with paper dolls."

"You're a liar," said the King.

Mickey gulped and drew back. Then he flung himself into the posture of his favorite hero in the sporting-pages. His pipe-stem arms worked spasmodically. He scowled the scowl that had struck terror into the hearts of his adversaries heretofore.

Behind him the Imp shrieked encouragement.

"Soak 'im, Mickey," cried the Imp.

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Mickey soaked him.

There was a sudden clatter as the Tin Sword dropped to the pavement; then Mickey and the Pretender became a flying whirlwind of arms, legs, and hair.

VI

BRIEF SKETCH OF A STATESMAN.—THE KING STRIKES A TELLING BLOW AND IS INVITED TO LUNCHEON

IN the rear room of the dilapidated saloon, a huge man in a threadbare frock-coat sat at a table, gloomily sipping beer. The frock-coat, funeral garment, was buttoned tightly across his chest. From that point it fell in lustrous cascades to the floor, lending an air of tarnished dignity to its wearer. This coat had grown polished by long contact with the world. It belonged to a former age, and should have been retired with honor years ago. But, having graced its owner's person in the days of his glory (he had been an Alderman, no less), it now clung to him as the failing mantle of twilight clings to the shoulders of the descending sun. As though to lighten this somberness of the dead past with some symbol of the brighter present, the extraordinary gentleman wore upon the back of his head a straw hat of almost

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jaunty pattern. His throat was clasped by a collar of the type known as standing. This particular collar had stood a long time. Its corners, bent down by a strong but not over-cleanly hand, gave grateful outlet to the harassed chin, which poured forth in numberless billows over a pale-green ocean of Ascot scarf. The large gentleman's brow, while not of prepossessing height, was swept by an impressive lock of sandy hair—the hall-mark of the practised Democrat. A pair of small blue eyes, melancholy by cultivation rather than by nature, peered out beneath gently frowning brows. The face was too full and round to carry the expression of noble sadness habitually imposed upon it. One of the gentleman's ears was peculiarly damaged. Early in his career, even before he became a Statesman, he had been a prize-fighter and heavyweight champion of the District.

Opposite this unique personage sat a little, owl-like man in a pink shirt, the sleeves of which were held up by elastics of a pale yellow. A derby hat, green with age, was tipped forward over the wearer's eyes, which looked out blandly from a perpetual shadow. The derby hat, if not the yellow elastics, proclaimed the little man to be a character of considerable im-

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portance about the premises. He was, in fact, Mr. Daniel Fogarty, proprietor of the saloon and Democratic leader of the District.

"I tell you," said Mr. Fogarty, "it's a sure thing. Drink up!"

His companion obeyed this congenial mandate with admirable despatch. The fact that Mr. Fogarty was accustomed to extend such invitations unconsciously, and from mere force of habit, did not prevent the Statesman from accepting them with methodical regularity.

"I've got it all framed for you to be Alderman again," continued Mr. Fogarty, casually. "The Boss has promised to throw me the support of the organization, and a few hundreds to educate the boys. You'll be elected, Terrence, or I'm a Republican!"

The frock-coated one stared with great melancholy into his beer-glass; then shook his head slowly. He had been an Alderman once. Why be an Alderman again? Why go forth once more into the heat and strife of the day?

"'Tis not in me plans," said he, "to return to public life. I have retired."

"All right," said Mr. Fogarty, gently. "Then you can retire from my books, too. I've carried you as a liability for five years, waitin' for a

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chance to put you across. How many drinks have you paid for in that time, Terrence? Think!"

The retired and retiring Statesman gazed unhappily into Mr. Fogarty's unblinking eyes.

"But I've got no sort of a political platform, at all—"

"*Drink up!* You're goin' to run for Alderman, not President. You don't need a platform any more than you need a furrin policy."

"I'll not run without a platform!"

"You'll run without your shirt if I tell you—*What's that?*"

A noise, rapidly increasing to a hurricane of noises, interrupted Mr. Fogarty in the midst of his observations on platforms. He rose and hastened to the front windows.

"Is it a riot?" asked the Statesman, surreptitiously pouring the beer from Mr. Fogarty's glass into his own.

"It is not," replied Mr. Fogarty, "it's only Mickey Flynn lickin' another lad."

"Is he lickin' him, Dan?"

"He is and he isn't. But it's a fast bout. Come and look, Terrence. 'Twill take you back."

"I don't want to be took back," retorted the

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other, gloomily. "I want to forget I was ever champeen of the District. I want to live in peace and—"

The side door burst open with a crash. Little Maggie O'Connor, white to the lips, hopped in like an agitated magpie.

"Papa," she cried, making for the frock-coated Statesman, "Come, quick, they're killin' him!"

At this startling interruption Mr. Terrence O'Connor's whole expression changed in a twinkling. The false melancholy vanished from his eyes, and into them leaped the flame of a transfiguring tenderness. Love shines in unexpected windows. . . .

"Who's killin' who? And what are ye all excited about, little Maggie?"

"It's Mickey Flynn and all. They're hurtin' him. He wasn't doin' a thing. He—"

Mr. O'Connor, now convinced that some desperate injustice was afoot, surged ponderously out of his chair and made for the street door, his footsteps sounding heavy accompaniment to Maggie's tapping crutch. Mr. Fogarty gazed approvingly at his selected candidate. He hoped that the bantam battle would arouse Mr. O'Connor's latent fighting blood.

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On the pavement outside the saloon, the entire Alley stood in a shrieking circle about the small whirlwind that occasionally resolved itself into Mickey and the King. It was a fast bout, as Mr. Fogarty had said. Once Mickey was on the very point of victory, but instead of delivering a sound buffet, and so administering the *coup de grâce*, he had elected to pull the stranger's hair. This unseemly action spurred the King to redoubled effort. He was a sturdy little chap to begin with, and regular hours at the dumb-bells and exercising-pulleys had made him sturdier. He twisted himself out of the enemy's grasp, his arms going like flails, and dealt a volley of blows that played havoc with the Almighty's conception of Mickey Flynn's features. Miss Philomena had builded better than she knew when she installed the punching-bag in the Play-room.

"Pull my hair, will you?" gasped the King, as his fists fell upon the enemy's countenance.

He rushed into close quarters, flung his arms about Mickey's waist and tugged mightily. The two went down together, but this unanimity of purpose did not endure. The next instant the King had climbed to a strategic position athwart the enemy's chest and was pounding

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the invincible one's nose until the welkin rang.

Then suddenly the King felt himself lifted by a great hand. His flailing fists fell upon the empty air. His feet touched the sidewalk and he would have leaped once more into the fray but for that restraining hand. He looked up and saw towering above him a huge man in a shiny frock-coat. The man's other hand was fastened in the sniffing Mickey's collar.

"Lad," said Mr. O'Connor, addressing the King, "what was the causus belly of the late unpleasantness?"

"Let me go," panted the King; "he pulled my hair!"

The Statesman turned an investigating eye upon Mickey Flynn.

"Pulled his hair, did ye?"

"He called me a liar," sniffled Mickey.

Here was a case that called for tact, wisdom, diplomacy, justice, and a broad knowledge of the human heart; also for the technique and etiquette of fisticuffs—all the various arts, indeed, of the Statesman and pugilist combined. It called, in short, for Mr. Terrence O'Connor and no other. That gentleman's decision was worthy of a Solomon.

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"Me lads," said he, "ye have fought, but ye have not fought accordin' to rule. Ye have called names and pulled hair, which is neither Markus of Queensbury *nor* good manners. Come along now, me bantams."

Taking a firm grasp of his two belligerents, Mr. O'Connor made off down the Alley, followed by a buzzing populace. . . . The King's Temper had begun to die away, and instead of the flame in him there was now only an aching emptiness. A lump came into his throat. His eyes smarted. He did not want to fight any more. He had come searching a kingdom, and had been set upon by a tribe of shrieking savages.

Just at this moment, which was an extremely critical one, because of the tears welling behind his eyes, the King felt a light touch upon his sleeve. Twisting about, he saw little Maggie—Maggie of the crutch and the friendly smile. She was panting with the effort to keep up, and as the King turned she leaned forward and whispered, fiercely:

"Hit 'im in th' belly!"

Then she disappeared. But the King went forward with a light heart. It made a very considerable difference just to have some one tell you to hit him in the belly.

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They arrived at a tumble-down grocer's shop with a showcase full of wilted cabbages, and this vague legend upon the window-glass:

T. O'CONNOR, GROCERIES & ETC.

Here Mr. O'Connor turned up a narrow passageway which ran alongside the grocer's shop and emptied into a typical back yard of the slums. A tall, but somewhat drunken fence clasped this back yard in maudlin embrace. A broken gate swung like a torn pocket in the fence. Old boxes, old barrels, old furniture, old rags, old tins, old rubbish of every description, contributed to the cosmopolitan untidiness of the back yard.

Kicking back some of the debris, Mr. O'Connor cleared a space large enough to stage the impending combat. The populace, meanwhile, distributed itself upon the boxes.

"'Tis not Madison Square Garden," said Mr. O'Connor, eying Mickey and the King, "but 'twill serve. Put up your hands now, me bantams, and remember—no hair-pullin'!"

The master of ceremonies sparred reminis-

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cently at space for a moment. Then, recalling the business in hand, he stopped and tilted his jaunty straw hat forward over his eyes.

"Ready now," said Mr. O'Connor. "When I say go—go!"

A thrilled silence fell upon the back yard. The watchers, huddled fearfully upon the boxes, held their breath against that time when they should lavish it in praise of Mickey Flynn. Certainly, after one defeat, Mickey would turn and annihilate this Pretender. But the Pretender himself seemed not to be particularly apprehensive. He was studying that portion of the enemy's anatomy extending from the waist-line upward. . . .

"Go!" said Mr. O'Connor.

The battle was one of the briefest ever recorded in the annals of royalist warfare. Upon Mr. O'Connor's saying "Go!"—which he did so heartily that the last button popped off his frock-coat—the King stepped forward briskly, shut his eyes, and swung both hands hard at the enemy's middle.

There was a faint, gurgling sound from Mickey the Invincible.

There was a sharp exclamation from the master of ceremonies.

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There was a sky-piercing shriek from the assembled Alley.

The King opened his eyes.

Prone upon the ground lay the deposed Mickey, gripped by some primal agony of spirit. His hands were pressed to the regions of his belt. Breath seemed to him a precious but quite unattainable luxury. He writhed, squirmed, shuddered, kicked, and gasped like a fish out of water.

"A clean knock-out in the first round," announced Mr. O'Connor, admiringly. He bent over the supine Mickey.

"Do ye want any more?" he asked, not un-hopefully.

"Naw!" wailed Mickey, and there was no doubting the sincerity of the denial. Mr. O'Connor turned to the King.

"Lad," said he, "ye have won the title, whatever that may be. I wish ye joy of it."

His melancholy having returned, Mr. O'Connor leaned gloomily against an empty apple-barrel and observed the actions of the populace as it crowded about victor and vanquished. With a cynic's eye, now slightly bloodshot from the morning's dissipation, Mr. O'Connor observed how the sons and daughters of man

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wavered in this crisis, neither openly declaring for the stranger, nor boldly sympathizing with the fallen hero. Some few of them, indeed, departed silently and without more ado by way of the small passage. The Alley had been turned upside down, and they did not know what to make of the ruins. So with aboriginal wisdom they retired to the outskirts of the trouble, withholding their support until such time as it could be granted to their own certain benefit. The rest remained, hypnotized by the indisputable fact that Mickey the Invincible had been defeated, both in primitive combat and in gentlemanly affray.

Then Mr. O'Connor, leaning morosely against his apple-barrel, was aware of one shining exception to the rule of politic indecision—and his bloated face lighted up once more with miraculous tenderness. Out of the crowd, of a sudden, came little Maggie, thrusting her way toward the King. With sparkling eyes she hobbled through the press until she stood quite close to the victor. Then she smiled—a flashing, glorious smile—and held out to him proudly the Tin Sword. So might Guinevere have bestowed Excaliber upon her Knight.

“I kep’ it for you,” said little Maggie, de-

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fiantly, and in that brief statement the Alley heard the voice of deathless loyalty speaking. Maggie O'Connor was on the side of the stranger, world without end.

In what way little Maggie's stand might have affected public opinion will never be known, for at that moment a window went up over the grocer's shop and a head appeared. The head belonged to a woman of billowing bosom, who leaned perilously over the sill to see what went forth in the yard below. Having swept the premises with an outraged glance, the woman put a hand as red as a lobster claw to her lips and called down:

"Mister O'Connor!"

Immediately every eye sought the window, including the slightly bloodshot eye of Mr. O'Connor.

"Is it a Sunday-school picnic," continued the head in the window, "or home rule for Ireland?"

"Me love," said Mr. O'Connor, steadying his somewhat wavering body by means of the apple-barrel, "'tis neither."

"Oh, 'tis neither, is it? And where have ye been these past two hours, Terrence O'Connor? 'Tis a wonder ye couldn't stay home and attend to the store, ye great loafer!"

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Against these cruel barbs Mr. O'Connor had no apparent armor. Vast unhappiness clouded his face. He shut his eyes in despair and leaned still more heavily upon the barrel.

The virago's gaze now sought the distant Mickey, in whom an immediate uneasiness stirred.

"Mickey Flynn," said the head in the window, "go home. Ye have been fightin' again."

"No'm," said Mickey, innocently.

"Ye have been fightin'," repeated Mrs. O'Connor, a trifle more grimly, "and ye have lied to cover it. I will see your mother this night."

"He was fightin', too," wailed Mickey, pointing to the King.

Mrs. O'Connor looked down upon the stranger with a melting eye. Something in the boy's direct blue gaze smote her motherly heart with sudden shafts of pity.

"So! And what were ye fightin' about, little man?"

The King gazed helplessly at his questioner. It was perfectly clear in his own mind that he had fought to gain a kingdom, but how could he explain that to a stout woman who seemed only to be a head in a window?

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"We fought," said the King in despair, "because we—we liked it."

Mrs. O'Connor sharply withdrew her head and after a brief interim put it out again with twitching lips.

"Mickey Flynn," said Mrs. O'Connor, "go and shake hands with the lad, and I'll say no word to your mother this night."

Mickey came forward with suspicious alacrity and held out his hand to the foe. A close witness might have noticed a decided lack of warmth on the part of the deposed monarch, but to Mrs. O'Connor in her window the handshake seemed honest enough.

"*Mister* O'Connor," she said, turning her attention once more to the Statesman, "if ye think he can stand up without the barrel ye might go into the store and get me a loaf of white bread. I'll be needin' it for lunch."

Stung by this unwifely taunt, Mr. O'Connor promptly severed his connections with the apple-barrel. But, alas for the frailties of the flesh! His foot caught in a loose hoop. There was a heavy thud, a dull thunder of Mr. O'Connor meeting terra firma. Then arose a wild patter of feet. The catastrophe had been too much for the Alley's overwrought nerves. With

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shrieks of unreasoning panic the audience fled pell-mell down the passageway, led by Mickey Flynn, the ex-invincible.

Mr. O'Connor's voice was lifted from the dust.

"The son of man is born to trouble. . . . Come take the hoop off me legs, little Maggie."

Mrs. O'Connor leaned from her window with flashing eyes.

"Maggie," she said, sharply, "come in to lunch now—and bring the little lad with ye."

VII

IN WHICH LITTLE MAGGIE IS ALMOST GLAD SHE IS
A LAMEY.—MR. O'CONNOR EATS CLOVES AND
IS INSPIRED ABOUT HIS PLATFORM

LUNCHEON at the O'Connors' was an informal affair. The meal itself consisted of beans, bread, boiled cabbage, and an extraordinarily weak tea, but the joy of reaching for things unrebuked made it one of the King's very pleasantest experiences.

The O'Connors lived over the grocer's shop of which Mr. O'Connor was at least the legendary proprietor. As a matter of fact, the business (if such it may be called) was left largely to conduct itself, upon the theory, doubtless, that independent effort makes for health, wealth, and general prosperity. Customers desiring provender of T. O'Connor, Groceries & Etc., were invited by a badly printed notice on the wall to take what they wanted and, after consulting the Directory of Prices, to drop their money into the cracker-box near the door.

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The Directory of Prices was a large bit of cardboard propped against the rusting scales. Once a day, or thereabouts, Mr. or Mrs. O'Connor (or one of the children) would slip down and make whatever changes were deemed necessary in the market quotations. As a result, the Directory was covered with figures upon figures, prices upon prices, so that it was practically a matter of choice with the purchaser whether he would have his potatoes at six or fifteen cents the quart. This lofty indefiniteness as to detail was not without its effect upon the public. The Alley flocked to buy its groceries & etc. at the self-conducted shop, and, as Mr. O'Connor often remarked, it was a touching and beautiful matter to empty the cracker-box of an evening. Frequently, instead of dull nickels, cold dimes, smug half-dollars, there would be various articles intimately human: an old shoe, still warm from the stumbling foot; a faded shawl, still molded to drooping shoulders; buttons from ragged coats; babies' rattles; tin pans with holes in their bottoms; cracked bits of china; imitation jewels; spools of thread; cakes of soap (but very few of these); cheap cigarettes; broken pipes; pieces of candy; wooden cruci-

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fixes; knives with missing blades; ornaments; knickknacks, gewgaws—until the heart overflowed and the eye grew moist. Mrs. O'Connor, it must be confessed, occasionally longed for more coldness in the way of dimes and dollars, but Mr. O'Connor (whose credit at Fogarty's was excellent) said that this capricious yield was both touching and beautiful. To a drummer who once attempted to sell him a cash-register Mr. O'Connor remarked, whimsically, that he had not the cash to operate it.

"What I need," said Mr. O'Connor, "is a machine that will register tobacco and old shoes. . . ."

The O'Connor living-apartment was located directly over the store. It was a luxurious, two-roomed salon which one attained after scaling a dark purgatory of stairs, each upward step of which was flavored with a different degree of the same general odor of boiled cabbage. At the top step this odor amounted almost to a personal affront.

Traversing a tiny, dark hall one entered directly the drawing-room, bedroom, reception-hall, parlor, library, study, sitting-room, and nursery. This versatile chamber was decorated by a picture of Mr. and Mrs. O'Connor in

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wedding garb, an unframed newspaper portrait of Mr. O'Connor the Statesman, another of Mr. O'Connor in skin tights and tri-colored belt, and a symbolic drawing from the back page of the *Journal* depicting the effects of demon rum upon a young man at a saloon table, this last tacked up by Mrs. O'Connor as a solemn, and at the same time subtle, warning to her lord. A retired wash-stand holding an oil-lamp occupied the center of the room. A double bed with a heavy list, a cot, a single bed, a baby's crib, and a broken-spirited chair stood against the wall. There was a window. . . .

From this chamber one stepped necessarily into the breakfast-room, tea-room, dining-room, laundry, kitchen, pantry, and conservatory. Here stood both stove and table, thus greatly facilitating the preparation and service of meals. The window in this half of the apartment permitted one a rare view of the back yard. Upon its sill, moreover, reposed a drooping geranium, which gave the diners an unusually decorative vista. . . .

Having deposited his side-arms in the front room, the King followed little Maggie into this second chamber, this *pièce à tout faire*. A bewildering number of children were seated at the

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table, eating and making some manner of noise. The O'Connor family, as Mr. O'Connor had remarked in an inspired moment, extended from infinity to infinity. It neither began nor ended. As far as historical research can determine, little Maggie was the eldest. To say who was the youngest is quite impossible. It was a shifting honor, no sooner settled upon one than snatched away by another. Even Mrs. O'Connor herself became slightly confused about this title, so rapidly did it change hands. Mrs. O'Connor conducted her family as Mr. O'Connor conducted his store, namely, by leaving it strictly to Providence.

As Maggie and the King entered the room Mrs. O'Connor turned from the stove, a great spoon in her hand, and confronted them. She was a large, shapeless woman with a red face, whose native good humor had been bracketed between two deep, grim lines about her mouth. When she smiled, it was a smile in parentheses. Yet despite this grimness of countenance there was something in Mrs. O'Connor's motherly eyes that made the King suddenly begin to love her.

"So this is the lad who was fightin' with Mickey Flynn!" exclaimed Mrs. O'Connor.

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"Find a place for him at the table, little Maggie—and the rest of ye, do try and stop some of the noise. 'Tis near deafened I am!"

Maggie complied by sweeping aside several of the younger brothers and sisters and establishing a place for herself and the King. The clatter of the feast died down for a moment as the stranger slid into his chair; eyes were turned with shy inquiry in his direction, then the meal took on its wonted atmosphere, the small trenchermen returned to their tasks with undiminished uproar. Nothing had been said by way of introduction, but it was clearly understood that the King was to have the freedom of the board.

"If you see anything you want, grab," said Maggie, with the air of one resolved to go to the extremes of hospitality.

Thus encouraged, the King set to work at the huge pile of beans and cabbage with which his plate was burdened. But although his fork—and it must be admitted occasionally his fingers—worked steadily, he nevertheless scarcely tasted a morsel of food that went into his mouth. He sat as one in a dream, dazed by the very number of those about him. The idea of more than one child to a family never before had

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occurred to him. Here, seated at a single table, was the nucleus of his empire. . . .

"Are there always as many as this?" asked the King, turning to little Maggie, who had not eaten a mouthful for staring at him. She nodded indifferently. Her thoughts were all of the green country from which she would never more be chased, from whose cool grass and bright flowers and tinkling fountain she would never more be turned away. All her tiny, twisted life she had wanted to be a Somebody, to walk in the Park, and play with the neatly starched children who strutted there. Now her time had come, her great hour was at hand! (By hard listening she could hear the clink of the magic key in the mysteriously jingling recesses of her companion's pocket.)

"We'll take them along," said the King, "for the people." And he ran his eye over the infinite O'Connors with extreme satisfaction.

Little Maggie's eyes grew dark with disappointment.

"I thought," she faltered, "it was just goin' to be—you and me."

"Oh no," said the King, "it's going to be a reg'lar kingdom." Putting his hand to his

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mouth and leaning closer, he added, "Like's in the Fairy-tales!"

Instant comprehension, mingled with flattering approval, replaced the look of disappointment upon the original citizen's countenance. She definitely abandoned her beans and cabbage. (Man does not live by bread alone.)

"With a real King?"

Her companion glanced about the board to see that he was not observed. Then, gazing at little Maggie, he nodded, at the same time leveling a modest forefinger unmistakably at his own breast.

"You!"

The King continued to nod.

"I thought it up," he explained. (Of course, having thought it up, he was privileged to be whatever he chose.)

"Will there be a band?" asked little Maggie, whose ideas of a fairy kingdom were somewhat confused with an unforgettable journey to Coney Island, taken in her early youth. The King gave this question his earnest consideration.

"I guess I'll have a band," said he, finally.

"And—*dances*?"

The King regarded his first citizen dubiously.

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To be strictly truthful, his program had not included dances—running more to battle and the manly sports—but perhaps it would be well to expand the program so as to provide occupation for both sexes. Then, too, there was such an eager look upon the first citizen's face.

"I guess so," said the King. But the next moment little Maggie drooped in her chair like a wilted flower. Her eyes filled with tears.

"I forgot," she whispered, looking down at her untouched plate. "I'm nothin' but a lamey. I couldn't dance, anyways."

The King stared at her in a miserable silence. The bowed head, the quivering lip, the tear just trembling from the long lashes—these were the manifestations of a sorrow that seemed to him monstrously unjust, unfair, and unreasonable. Why need there be any lameys in the world? Most of all, why need such an affliction be visited upon little Maggie, who was moved to dance by inward harmony and prevented from doing so by outward discord; who was caught and bruised between the Song and the Sorrow? It was the King's first encounter with the windmill of cruel fact, and he rode at it with a dauntless Quixotic proposal. Groping

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beneath the table, he found little Maggie's hand.

"What d' you care?" he whispered, in return.
"You can be the Queen!"

Ah, brave Knight! Gallant King! You have slain a black sorrow this day with your fair generosity!

Happiness dawned in little Maggie's eyes as morning dawns in a blue heaven. Her hand clung to the King's. A great lump came into her throat. She could not speak. For the first time since she could remember she was almost glad to be a lamey. Queen Maggie of the green country!

"Promise!"

"Yes," said the King, "and you can be first in, too."

First in!

The Queen pretended to have dropped something on the floor, this to conceal the welling tears of joy, to hide the flushed face, to gain control of the fluttering breath. First in, and a Queen! The King felt something soft and warm on the back of his hand, and forthwith snatched it away. Yet I dare say the hand of King was never kissed so sincerely, so tenderly in all the world before. . . .

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At that moment the door was darkened by the huge figure of Mr. O'Connor, who entered with a propitiatory smile, and, as unobtrusively as might be, sank into a groaning chair at the head of the table. It was as though an elephant should attempt to enter a kindergarten without attracting the teacher's attention.

Yet by some means Mr. O'Connor had shaken off the slight unsteadiness which had brought him low half an hour before. He had his center of gravity well in hand; his equilibrium under wraps. There was upon his breath, moreover, a distinct suggestion of cloves; cloves in quantities, cloves in handfuls, cloves taken desperately under the spur of vital necessity. Indeed, whatever else the grocer's shop might run out of, it was never short of cloves. Mr. O'Connor found in cloves a purifying element which extended not only to the breath, but to the spirit as well. Spice upon the tongue was ablution to the soul. Mr. O'Connor took an almost religious comfort in cloves.

Having drawn his chair up to the board, Mr. O'Connor now produced from the cavernous pocket of the threadbare frock-coat a loaf of bread, which he placed upon the naked table-top. His eyes, as he glanced at Mrs. O'Connor

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standing over the stove, were the eyes of a mastiff that has fetched home the packet intrusted to his care.

"There was no bread in the store," said Mr. O'Connor. "I was forced to go across the street for it."

"More likely to the corner," replied Mrs. O'Connor, launching a chance thrust. Mr. O'Connor gave a little start, but immediately assumed an air of innocent frankness.

"The corner was included in me course," said he. "Indeed, I may say I was there on special business."

"Dan Fogarty's business it was, then!"

"Aye!" roared Mr. O'Connor, overjoyed to have made his point so neatly. "'Twas Dan Fogarty's business. He has offered me the nomination for Alderman from this District!"

Mrs. O'Connor, for the first time in her long career of stirring pottages, dropped the great spoon into the cabbage.

"Saints and angels! What did ye say to that, Terrence dear?"

"I said, 'I'll think it over, Daniel; I'll think it over.'"

"Think it over, Terrence! Don't ye want to be an Alderman again?"

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Mr. O'Connor waved his hand.

"That's as may be. Ye don't understand politics. No woman does. I haven't the ghost of a platform—"

"And what is a platform, Terrence?"

"A platform," said Mr. O'Connor (who was no more averse to enlightening his table than I am mine, or you yours, gentle reader)—"a platform is what ye promise the voters before you're elected."

"If it's nothin' but promises," said Mrs. O'Connor, "ye ought to have a grand good one, Terrence!"

Finding no reply to this connubial remark, Mr. O'Connor, following world-old precedent, pretended that he had not heard it. From an educational dissertation upon the affairs of state he turned to beans and cabbage. Then Mrs. O'Connor, repenting a little of her verbal darts, heaped his plate with a fresh helping of the provender. As she leaned above her melancholy Statesman the King distinctly saw her stoop and kiss Mr. O'Connor's unshaven cheek. From that moment he loved Mrs. O'Connor very much indeed, although he could not have told why. . . .

Nor was he in the least awed, any longer, by

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Mr. O'Connor's grand manner and impressive frock-coat. He had a feeling that it was all a great game, and that Mr. and Mrs. O'Connor were children, too—children who played at being grown up. So when, a little later, Mr. O'Connor's eye met his, the King smiled in the friendliest fashion. Whereupon Mr. O'Connor rose and bowed with some ceremony.

"'Tis the lad who licked Mickey Flynn," said he, beaming.

"Twice," replied the King, who had not yet forgiven Mr. O'Connor for making him win his battle a second time.

"Ye're a hard-hittin' little tyke," observed Mr. O'Connor, nodding his head. "Maybe ye'll be a champeen some day."

"I was going to be," said the hard-hitting little tyke, "but I'm not now."

"And why not?"

"Because I am going to be a King."

"Sure, that's a grand business. I had an ancistor once was King of England—or so he said. What would you be the King of, little man?"

"Of the Park," said my bold monarch, with a glance at his first citizen.

Whereat little Maggie precipitated herself

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into the conversation with trembling eagerness.

"And *I'm* going to be the Queen!"

Mr. O'Connor leaned back in his chair, a sudden meditative light in his eyes. He was overcome, doubtless, by the thought of being parent to a Queen.

"*He* has the key," continued little Maggie, breathlessly, pointing to the King, "and they can't chase us out any more."

"No more they should," growled Mr. O'Connor, with a toss of his Democratic mane. "The parks," he added, bringing his fist down upon the table, as though making a political speech, "should be free and equal to every man, woman, and child." His eyes now had a distant look, a look of contemplated visions. His brows were contracted in a frown which seemed of itself to right the whole injustice of the world. Plainly Mr. O'Connor was inspired about something.

"There's no fun playin' in the Alley," said little Maggie, wistfully. "It's too—*brickly*. I wish I could bring the Park here, and *live* in it!"

"Glory be!" roared Mr. O'Connor, suddenly springing to his feet; "'tis me platform!"

"Whatever do ye mean?" cried Mrs. O'Con-

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nor, dropping once more the almost-rescued spoon.

"I mean—make an issue of it," said the Statesman, staring down at the nucleus of empire. "More space for the childer to play in! More sunshine, more fresh air, more grass, more trees, more flowers—more *green!* By St. Patrick, there was never such a platform in all the history of the District!"

VIII

MAGGIE COUNSELS THE WISDOM OF THE SERPENT.
—HOW JOY TRIUMPHS OVER A GREEN
PICKLE.—PRODIGAL EXTRAVAGANCE
OF THE KING

IT was that confidential hour after luncheon when the affairs of the world are settled upon a full stomach, and settled the more wisely for that reason. The King and Queen sat cross-legged upon a shelf in the grocer's shop, facing each other. This dusty cliff commanded a clear view of the Alley and was high enough to insure its occupants against detection. Except for a rather perilous ascent by way of packing-boxes piled on end, it provided an admirable retreat for a lamey. The shelf was Maggie's favorite cloister, and there she had taken the King, directly luncheon was concluded.

Forthwith the two began to plot the establishment of their kingdom. Their first concern, naturally enough, was for the procurement of a populace. The King, it must be said, had un-

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derestimated the difficulty of this part of the venture. His plan was merely to issue invitations for the enfranchisement of all persons not over eight-going-on-nine. But it seemed that one could not do business in this brusque manner. Maggie pointed out that the Alley was still loyal to Mickey Flynn, or, at least, to his memory, and would remain so unless immediate steps were taken to divert its fickle fancy. In this crisis the King turned instinctively to a woman, as many another King has done. Nor did it seem that his confidence was misplaced.

"What's that sort of a jingle in your pocket?" asked Maggie, with inspired suspicion.

The King promptly produced the marble-bag and began to fumble at the draw-string.

"Want to know something?"

"Yes!"

"I got a thousand dollars in this bag, maybe."

"It looks like pennies," said the Queen, doubtfully, as the golden flood was poured into her lap. Then she glanced up at him with a little shy smile.

"I know! *You pretended!*"

"That's nothing," said the King. "Once I pretended I had all the money in the world!"

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"So did I!" The confession came in an awed whisper.

"What 'd you do with yours?" (It is always a fascinating matter to discover how a woman spends her fortune.)

"I bought the Red-Plush Crutch in Max-man's window!" replied little Maggie, softly, and once again the King detected the presence of that Unjust Sorrow, so he said:

"You could have a lot of fun with a crutch, hoppin' around—and everything."

"I'll take you to see this one," cried little Maggie, delighted to have been thought original. The next instant she had caught his sleeve and was pointing eagerly toward the street.

"There's Mickey Flynn now!"

The King glanced into the Alley. There, indeed, was Mickey Flynn. He stood at the opposite curb, a large green pickle in his hand, and kicked at bits of rubbish with an air of leisurely nonchalance. Intermittently he refreshed himself with the pickle. He appeared to be waiting for a turn in the tides of fortune. . . .

Soon other children came into the street, evidently fresh from the midday meal. Scarcely one of these but held in a grimy fist some bit

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of bread, cracker, fruit, or sweet. Several, indeed, had elected to consume entire courses in the public gaze. The new-comers gravitated slowly about Mickey Flynn, until shortly that young man found himself the center of a throng which stood in silent sympathy upon the pave, sighing when Mickey sighed, nibbling when Mickey nibbled. It was evident that Maggie had analyzed her world correctly. The Alley was still loyal to Mickey Flynn.

Now a ragged henchman, burning for his leader's revenge, stepped quite close to Mickey, and, making a scrawny fist, first shook it at the O'Connors' upper windows, and then significantly touched eye, nose, mouth, and cheek. Following which he turned and gave Mickey Flynn a heartening whack across the shoulders. But Mickey only sighed and shook his head. He was not one to invite disaster a second time.

"I'll go down," said the King, preparing to abandon the shelf, "and dast him over!"

But Maggie grasped her consort's arm. With true intuition she perceived that it was a case for the wisdom of the serpent rather than for the strength of the lion.

"Don't pay any 'tention to him," said the

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Queen. "He's just a big— 'Ssh! *Do you hear music?*"

The King listened intently, then nodded. Faintly distinguishable from the clamor of the world beyond the window there sounded the thin strains of some painful lyric. These strains grew steadily louder, until it was almost possible to identify the tune at which they labored. Little Maggie, clasping the King's arm with tense fingers, leaned far out over the shelf, peering toward the corner of the Alley.

"Look!" cried Maggie, suddenly. "It's the Merry-go-round!"

A curious contrivance, half ordinary wagon, half divine chariot, was progressing through the Alley at the heels of two proud steeds whose head-stalls were decorated with great waving plumes of red, white, and blue. A smiling Italian, with a cockade in his hat, guided the chariot upon its course. This Italian was a versatile fellow, combining as he did a masterly horsemanship with the high genius of the musician. For while one hand controlled the gaudy steeds, the other turned the handle of an upright street piano which stood upon the fore part of the wagon, directly behind the driver's seat. As the divine vehicle proceeded, the

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voice of this instrument was lifted in song. Volume was its aim, rather than tonal sweetness. In this open business of the streets, Music, Heavenly Maid, must depend upon volume for her very existence.

The gay driver, the plumed horses, the trumpeting piano—these were but preludes to the crowning glory of the chariot. Behold upon its creaking bed a miniature Merry-go-round, canopied, bedecked, caparisoned, hung with flags and bunting, and painted with thrilling scenes of love and war! This miracle occupied the center of the wagon, and was placed upon a pivot so that by turning a crank it could be made to revolve in a dizzy orbit of joy. Four prancing mustangs, pinned through the middle by steel rods (like a zoologist's specimens), invited the populace to mount and ride upon the wings of equestrian fancy. For those less adventurously inclined two highly decorative seats were provided. A tiny flight of steps led up to the Merry-go-round. A broad black strap prevented the revelers from falling out, once they had attained their places in the whirl of pleasure. A second Italian, whose genius ran to bone and muscle, trudged blandly in the wake of the

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crawling vehicle. He was a man of mighty sinews, of broad shoulders, and sound wind. He was, in short, the man who turned the crank.

The attraction rolled up to the curb; came to a halt directly in front of Mickey and his host of admirers. The driver rose, bowed toward the thick of the crowd, hung his reins upon a hook provided for the purpose, and proceeded to strike up an entirely new and irresistible tune. The substantial Italian at the rear gave the Merry-go-round a twirl or two, unfastened the strap, and set out a small sign, printed in three languages, the English version of which read:

ONE RIDE, ONE SCENT

The Merry-go-round was now prepared to do business.

But business is a fickle jade. Promising as the Alley had seemed from the mouth of it, overrun as it was with children, nevertheless the Merry-go-round spun emptily for two whole tunes. Then a few modest adventurers mounted the steps, paying their fees into the

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hand of him who supplied the motive power and climbing with conscious superiority to the backs of the pinioned mustangs. A new tune was inaugurated. Forward sped the adventurers, until such time as it seemed they might grow ill of the motion. Then the sagacious cranker, with an eye to the comfort as well as to the pleasure of his patrons, reversed the process and set them to galloping backward. Thus the qualms of dizziness were allayed, and when the music had come to a well-deserved end the equestrians dismounted, feeling refreshed both in body and in spirit. Others took their places, yet not with that avidity which marks the visitation of good business.

Mickey Flynn was among those conspicuously absent from the festivities. He stood with one hand thrust deep into a torn pocket, a scowl upon his face, a green pickle at his lips, fairly hurling disapproval at the merrymakers. About him stood the main forces of the Alley, also scowling, also outwardly disapproving. But beneath this veneer of contempt there was to be observed a certain wistfulness, a certain desire, a certain hope, perhaps, that Mickey would relent of his condemnatory attitude and lead them to happiness by way of the galloping

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mustangs. In the breasts of these retainers, moreover, was a growing suspicion that Mickey himself would have enjoyed a ride upon the Merry-go-round if he could have secured it. In fine, his assumption of dignified scorn for the proceedings was a sham, a mask, a confession of weakness. Here was a crisis which demanded not passive indifference, but active financiering. Funds were needed for the Alley's enjoyment. It was the time for clever manipulation of securities, for the rapid converting of commodities into cash, for the flotation, in short, of a public loan. But Mickey only continued to eat a pickle.

Upon the shelf in the grocer's shop the King and Queen sat watching the struggle between joy and a green pickle. Suddenly little Maggie's eyes began to sparkle with excitement. Grasping the King's arm, she unfolded a plan which, for sheer cunning and diplomacy, would have been worthy of an Elizabeth. The next moment the King was wriggling backward off the shelf, the red marble-bag clutched in his hand.

Mickey Flynn, standing in the midst of his admirers, looked up to see the figure of his late adversary emerging from the grocery-shop door.

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The pickle dropped from Mickey's hand. He took an involuntary step backward, then checked himself. He could not beat a retreat in the presence of his retainers, however necessary and logical such a retreat would seem to be.

But the King gave no evidence of being beligerently inclined. He came directly across the street and, ignoring the others, approached the curb where Mickey stood, blackly scowling. The Merry-go-round had just concluded its fourth tune. In the ensuing silence spake the King:

"Want a ride?"

Mickey's mouth opened; closed again. Instinctively he feared the Greeks bearing gifts.

"Aw, g'wan!" he ventured, non-committally.

Then, in the presence of the entire Alley, the King drew from his pocket the red marble-bag and took from it a glittering, bewildering handful of new pennies. These he held out in his open palm. A gasp went up from the crowd.

"I—I don't care if I do," said Mickey, swallowing hard.

The King turned to the fickle throng, now drawn in a breathless circle about him.

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"You can all get on if you want to," said the King.

If they wanted to!

Immediately business with the Merry-go-round became good, became very good, became excellent. Old allegiances forgot, the Alley rushed to the foot of the tiny steps, surging clamorously against the knees of the sagacious cranker, who, having perceived the source of this golden onslaught, suddenly caught the King out of the press and lifted him to the saddle of the tallest mustang. The Alley broke into deafening cheers. Mickey Flynn came next, mounting the steed immediately behind the King. Four or five others followed. The Merry-go-round was pronounced to be filled. The strap went up. The music blared. The cranker cranked. Amid the applause of the joyous populace the circular platform began to turn, faster, faster, until the King and his erstwhile enemy became one continuous streak of Joy Incarnate. . . .

And upon her shelf in the grocer's shop the cause of it all sat rocking to and fro, and whispering rapturously to herself:

"Queen Maggie! Queen Maggie! Queen Maggie!"

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The wheezy piano poured out its metallic soul in song. The gay driver-musician turned and turned its rattling handle until his smile became fixed and wooden. The perspiration of honest toil streamed upon the face of the sagacious cranker. His bland countenance took on an expression of vague bewilderment. He was wondering if there was such a thing as business that was *too good*. Finally, glancing over the backs of the pinioned mustangs, he caught the eye of his talented brother. A look passed between them. The Merry-go-round suddenly stopped turning. The piano breathed its last. Silence hung heavy upon the Alley's ears.

"All-a gone!" panted the cranker to the King. "No mora da turn-around." And he leaned against the divine chariot, wiping his brow.

"Wait a minute—please!"

The King turned and dashed across the Alley, leaped the sidewalk in a bound, and burst excitedly into the grocer's shop.

"Maggie!" cried the King. "Come quick and have a ride! It's going away!"

"I was just comin' down," answered the Queen, and, indeed, the statement was borne out by bare fact. Maggie's manner of descent

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from the shelf was one peculiarly her own. First came her legs, then came a bit of Maggie, then came dresses and other sartorial embellishment, screwed into a knot by the exigencies of the situation; finally came the rest of Maggie, slowly but surely, until the packing-boxes were safely negotiated and the floor reached. There the Queen shook herself; the loose ends of her toilette came magically to rights; garments straightened. The crutch, previously lowered, was picked up and tucked under a thin arm and little Maggie stood equipped to face her world.

"Hurry!" said the King, catching her hand in his.

"I—I don't think they'll wait. I—"

"Yes, they will, too. Come on!"

Not only was the Merry-go-round waiting, but the entire Alley besides. As Maggie and the King emerged from the grocer's shop a hush fell upon the street, in which the tapping of the lame Queen's crutch could be plainly heard. Maggie's instinct, as she fronted the familiar rag, tag, and bobtail, was to turn and flee. They had never been kind to her, those little wolves. But a glance at the sturdy boy beside her drove all such unqueenly thoughts

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from her mind. She shut her lips tight, and hopped bravely into the limelight of a great publicity.

The exhausted cranker still leaned heavily against his chariot, but when he saw the King approaching with the little lame girl, he forthwith sprang to his post, the ghost of a gallant smile illuminating his perspiring features.

But observe who comes to unloosen the strap and hand the lame Queen up the steps—another Raleigh in rags! It is Mickey Flynn, no less; Mickey the vanquished, but never Mickey the nonentity. As Maggie approached, with scarlet cheeks and brave eyes, Mickey placed a courtier's hand beneath her patched elbow and gave a perfunctory push upward, completing the gesture with a graceful flourish which indicated to the world that he had officially assisted at the ascent of the King's favorite. What more natural, following this official ceremony, than that he should follow the King up the steps and leap to the saddle of an attendant steed? If this chanced to be Mickey's eighth free ride, what then?

"Let 'er go!" called the King.

So she was let go, with a royal burst of music and a great shout from the assembled populace.

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The platform whirled like a star through space. The world grew blurred and dim. The Queen closed her eyes and clutched the sides of her revolving throne. She was gloriously, splendidly dizzy—and happier than she had ever been in all her life before.

IX

IN WHICH THE ALLEY PLANS A GREAT ADVENTURE.

—THE FORGING OF THE WOODEN SWORDS.

—ENTRANCE OF A BAD WOMAN

MID-AFTERNOON in O'Connor's Alley. Behind a high bulwark of rubbish in the historic back yard, the King and Mickey Flynn sat, earnestly plotting the great adventure. Upon a discarded cracker-box, a few paces away, sat little Maggie, elbows on her knees, chin in her hands, her glance fixed warily upon the King's face. When he needed diplomatic assistance she came spontaneously to the rescue. When ideas lagged, she supplied new ideas. Invaluable in the creation of empire is the voice of woman. . . .

"Why don't we *live* in the Park?" suggested little Maggie, during a lull in the plotting.

"All right," said the King.

"We can shoot things and eat 'em," opined Mickey Flynn, with interest.

"No!" said Maggie, indignant at this blood-

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thirsty plan. "We'll take some bananas from the store."

Mickey Flynn gazed gloomily at the King.

"You goin' to have girls in it?" he asked.

It was a question which had troubled many a taller monarch. But the King was a progressive.

"Girls can do a lot of things," ventured the King.

"What can they do?"

"They can sew and cook and—and be the Queen."

"I don't see what good a Queen is," said Mickey, pessimistically.

At this anarchistic observation the King was almost nonplussed. Evidently Mickey Flynn's education had been neglected.

"Why, they *always* have a Queen!"

Mickey considered this statement in silence.

"What else do they have?" he inquired, finally.

"Battles," said the King, "and armies—"

"Mickey can be Captain of the Army," improvised little Maggie, cunningly contriving to poke the King's foot with her crutch.

"You can be Captain," echoed the grateful monarch.

Mickey spat enthusiastically into the dust.

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"I'll get up an Army, all right," he said. Rising, he kicked his own cracker-box into a distant corner of the yard, which, being interpreted, meant that Mickey had resigned his seat in council for the pleasanter hazards of active service. He put his fingers into his mouth, curled back his lips, and produced a noise which seemed to be the peculiar art of the Alley.

"What are you whistling for?" asked the King.

"For the gang," said Mickey.

The gang came. Scarcely had the vibrations of that shrill whistle ceased when the vanguard of the Alley thrust eager faces into the back yard. There was a light of eternal quest in the eyes of these small vagabonds. They were like little starved scavengers, eternally nosing out the small bones of excitement that fell to their portion, forever wistfully trailing some golden quarry of a Dream. . . .

They were the Other Children, gathered together by an indefinable hope, and the King, watching them pour through the passageway, felt a sudden rebellious sympathy rise within him. He wanted to leap up, then and there, and lead them away to the green country, where

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the grass was cool and sweet and where the trees nodded in the wind. But that time was not yet.

(In a few more years the light will be gone from the eyes of these little ones, and the quest from their hearts. They will be dulled to the tasks that the world inevitably will lay upon them. They will bear insufferable burdens silently, knowing that, having denied them their childhood, the world will deny them all else in life that is divine. . . .)

The mobilization of O'Connor's Alley proceeded with admirable despatch. Both boys and girls came running down the passage, the latter in most cases clutching round-eyed babies in their arms. The little mothers of the byways do not play at dolls. . . .

Leading the procession came the clan O'Connor, which neither began nor ended. Then came Sadie and Isador and Samuel Goronivinsky, with Baby Goronivinsky a matter of dispute between them—

Came the Fogarty girls, in pink gingham, which they wore with an air. (The Fogarty girls approximated the aristocracy of the Alley. Their father owned the corner saloon and the votes of the District.)

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Came the Giovanni Farinas, offspring of a slowly expiring candy business across the Alley. Mr. Farina had received his third Black Hand letter that week and was beginning to explore the unplumbed depths of Mr. Fogarty's whisky.

"Here comes Benny Ernspicker," announced Mickey, in an official aside to the King. "He's got a first-hand harmonica. He can be de band."

Came Benny Ernspicker, with his first-hand harmonica. Benny's father was a waiter in a Second Avenue table-d'hôte café, and was counted a prosperous man.

Came the Levinsky twins, Isaac and Morris, and Susie Costello, with Baby Costello wriggling at her small, flat breast, and Yetta Horowitz, and the six Maxmans, five boys and a girl, whose parent owned the pawn-shop appropriately located opposite the saloon, and the Graziolas and the Einsteins and the Murphys and the Schmidts.

"Heinie Schmidt got a drum last Chris'mus," announced Mickey. "He can be de band with Benny."

"What can he play?" asked the King.

"He just drums," replied the Chief of Staff.

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So here was gathered a kingdom in the raw, and no great bother about it, either. Why grown-ups (who are commonly supposed to be clever folk) need make such a to-do about their empire-building is more than I, for one, can say. Perhaps it is because they have forgotten the dream of it. . . .

The Chief of Staff stood erect upon a small heap of rubbish and addressed the multitude. His words were brief and to the point, as a soldier's words should be.

"We're all goin' to run away," said Mickey Flynn.

The Alley drew a great breath and exhaled it slowly. Here was a project to snare the imagination, to quicken the pulse. Immediately all eyes were shifted from Mickey to the King. With unerring instinct the Alley perceived that this was but another instance of the stranger's daring originality. The best that Mickey had ever done was to lead them to the river for a contraband swim.

The Chief of Staff, observing that he was, at best, but an adjunct to greatness, pointed to the King and said, in slow and solemn tones:

"He has bought the Park."

Now in that particular province of the slums

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there was but one park. Other bits of green country might lie with flung gates to north and south, like small oases in a desert of paving-stones, but when one said the *Park*—with a peculiar whispering intonation—one meant the forbidden kingdom of the iron fences, which opened only to a shining key in the hands of the eternally blest. There was not a tatterde-malion in the back yard who had not laid cheek, at one time or another, to the iron fences, and longed for miracles to melt them away. It was the Alley's Promised Land, not far removed from the heaven which one inhabited, according to orthodox rumor, when one died. Hence, Mickey's statement was received in superlative silence, out of the bourne of which was lifted one voice of inevitable doubt:

"Aw, g'wan!"

"Show 'em the key!" said Mickey, gazing scornfully in the direction of the voice.

The King rose, tugging at his pocket. It was the same pocket from which he had drawn the magic bag somewhat earlier in the afternoon. Doubtless he could have produced white rabbits from it had he so desired! The Other Children rose and crowded about him, craning their necks to see. Suddenly, out of the heart of the throng

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the King's hand shot skyward. Between thumb and forefinger was to be observed a shining key!

The Voice of the Doubter was heard no more in the land.

Yet even as Doubt vanished, Objection arose. Sadie Goronivinsky, whose young life was linked to that of the infant Goronivinsky, became suddenly smitten with the cold actualities of life as opposed to this delightful day-dreaming.

"I couldn't go it no runaways," cried Sadie. "I got to stay home and be a mamma on the baby!"

Poor little Sadie! At the age of seven she had voiced the wail of womanhood!

The germ of objection spread to the Levinsky twins.

"We'd get it a lickin'," said the eldest twin, who spoke for the family.

"So'd we!" echoed the Graziolas, and the Murphys, and the Einsteins, and the Schmidts. The certainty of this fate appeared to be unanimous.

Little Maggie O'Connor rose flaming on her crutch.

"You won't get a lickin' if you don't *tell*. We're goin' to the Park and lock all the gates —and *live there!*"

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"What do we live in?" demanded one of the Fogarty young ladies, who, as a member of the aristocracy, must concern herself with these small conventions. The Alley looked at the King interrogatively, but with perfect trust.

"Tents," said that personage, promptly. It had popped into his head upon the instant, and was too obvious an inspiration to be denied. Miss Fogarty subsided. But Heinie Schmidt, whose well-rounded body proclaimed him to be an essential patron of the fleshpots, propounded a new and even more vital question.

"What do we have to eat?"

The Chief of Staff glanced defiantly at the Queen.

"We shoot things!"

Little Maggie's protest was drowned in a general shout of approbation from the male contingent of the Alley. Whereat the King, perceiving that the time was now ripe, suggested to Captain Mickey that he proceed with the enlistment of troops.

"Why don't you get up the Army?" asked the King.

A cheer burst from the Alley's throats. There was a spontaneous rush forward, as always at a call to arms, and straightway the Chief of

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Staff found himself surrounded by eager volunteers who clamored to be placed upon the military rolls.

"You're all in the Army," cried Mickey in desperation, "except Benny Ernspicker and Heinie Schmidt."

From these two young gentlemen promptly went up a howl of protest.

"I can lick Issy Goronivinsky," shrieked Benny, hotly.

"I can lick Morris Levinsky," stated Heinie, with Teutonic calm.

"Aw," said Mickey, "you ain't goin' to get left out. You're de Band."

Pride replaced the look of outraged injustice upon the faces of the protesting twain. Practically any man may be a soldier, but only those especially appointed by nature may be the band.

At this point little Maggie, who had vanished temporarily from the Alley's councils, reappeared upon the outskirts of the crowd, the Tin Sword gleaming in her hand. It was the second time that she had returned the King his blade, but whereas in the first instance she had been flying in the face of public opinion, now she was borne upon the very tide of it.

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"You left this up-stairs," said little Maggie, as the glittering weapon passed from her hand to his. Proudly she watched the King buckle it about his waist. He was a gallant figure, thus armed, and one which invited immediate imitation. Forthwith the entire masculine portion of the Alley was gripped by a desire to own and wear such a weapon.

"What do *we* have?" demanded Mickey, enviously.

There was a murmur of approval from all citizens of the military sex. What did *they* have? Little Maggie, as loyal as she was, felt her heart grow cold. She glanced apprehensively at the King. How would he meet this new question? Had he money enough to provide armament for the entire Alley?

The King gazed speculatively at the litter of old boxes that strewed the back yard.

"If I only had a hatchet—" said he.

"There's one in the store," cried Maggie, hobbling with renewed hope toward the rear of the grocer's shop. Soon she was back with an implement which, for all its age, still possessed those two main requirements of a hatchet, an edge and a handle.

A moment later the King was on his knees

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hacking away at an empty box, with O'Connor's Alley in an entranced, bright-eyed circle about him. He himself in the period before the acquisition of the Tin Sword had wrought in the Play-room smithy such arms as now he forged for the edification and accoutrement of his troops. First stripping a long shaft from the side of the box, he hacked one end of it into a belligerent point. Then cutting a short piece, he arranged it crosswise on the haft of the potential blade, and, taking a nail loosened in the general destruction of the box, fastened the two pieces together with a triumphant series of blows from the blunt end of the hatchet. The last of these blows, as luck would have it, descended upon the King's thumb, but he endured the pain with heroic calm, feeling that a pounded finger was a small price to pay for the applause which greeted the completion of his splendid task.

Flushed with this success, the King arose and, seizing the wooden sword by its rough but unmistakable point, presented it with a flourish to Mickey Flynn. Mickey, overwhelmed by such an honor, acknowledged it by spitting violently into space and thrusting the sword through a convenient rent in the top of his trousers.

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"So 'elp me God!" shrieked Mickey, who, bursting with the enthusiasm of the moment, must needs pledge his loyalty and affection in the only oathish-sounding phrase he could lay tongue to. Curiously enough, there seemed to be no doubt in the Alley's mind as to Mickey's meaning. The Chief of Staff was cheered to the echo.

For the next hour there resounded throughout the Alley a noise of constructive thunders; a rending of wood and a ringing of commandeered hatchets. Raiding-parties were despatched to collect more material; scouts dashed here and there in search of the precious soap-box or the priceless nail. O'Connor's Alley was arming for the King's adventure, enthusiastically aided by its women-folk, who risked life and limb holding the cross-piece while their lords pounded. The King, being honorably wounded, did not share in the actual labors thereafter, but went from forge to forge, from rubbish-heap to rubbish-heap, directing the work and encouraging the workers.

One by one the wooden swords were completed, until by the time the afternoon sun began to burn red in its little patch of slum sky, a fine impressive pile of weapons stood in the

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sliver-carpeted back yard, and all at the inconsequential cost of a few pounded fingers and a splinter or two under the skin. Never was an empire armed so cheaply.

And just at that juncture the broken gate in the fence swung open with a squeak and a woman came through the gate. She was dressed all in black, save for a bit of cheap red ribbon at her throat. Her face was pale, but there was a sort of faded beauty haunting her, like the beauty of a flower that has been shriveled in the sun. Her eyes were like stars gone to ashes. She was neither young nor old.

When she saw the children she paused. One hand fluttered to her breast. Bitter lines crept out and robbed her face of any softness.

O'Connor's Alley had turned at the opening of the gate. Seeing the woman, they immediately began to chant amazing maledictions upon the twilight air.

"Ya! Bad Woman! Bad Woman!" rose the surprising singsong, to the accompaniment of a steady hissing.

They crept closer, like a pack of hungry little wolves. A stick went hurtling through the air and touched the edge of the somber woman's skirt. She stood with her back to the fence,

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scorning escape, regarding with a still, terrible smile the antics of the little wolves who yapped at her feet.

Evidently it was an old game, this hunting of the Bad Woman. Indeed, the Alley had long considered her legitimate quarry, to be run to earth wherever found. They had not the slightest notion of her crimes and offenses, but they knew that she was a woman whispered about, and that there would be no reproof from their elders for snapping at her heels. And it was royal sport, for, of all game, the human at bay is the best hunting.

Another stick flew through the air, this time with deadlier aim. The woman put her hand to her face in a bewildered way, as though doubting the actuality of this last insult. A thin streak of crimson trickled across her cheek. In a blaze of fury she came at her tormentors. . . .

Then suddenly a shrill voice rose hotly above the babel of shrieks and hisses:

"If you touch her I'll kill you!"

Slowly the woman's clenched fists relaxed. In the little clear space between the wolves and the quarry stood the King, shaking in that awful storm of his Temper, the Tin Sword cut-

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ting and whistling ominously in the face of his mutinous kingdom.

The woman's hands went convulsively to her throat. She saw the sunlight on the King's yellow hair, and the brave, splendid, ridiculous glitter of his make-believe sword, and then, as though she had beheld a blinding vision, the Bad Woman flung her arm across her eyes, turned, and stumbled back through the gate in the fence. . . .

Behind him the King heard the closing gate. The fire of his Temper—his strange, explosive Temper—began to wane and grow cold. Still he stood and faced his people, for the second time that day.

But now no champion came through the cheering ranks to do him battle. He was the King, and they could not meet his eyes.

One by one, they stole away, those little shamed wolves, calling to one another with elaborate carelessness that supper must be about ready now.

The King stood watching them go, bewildered, lonely, and unhappy—vastly unhappy because of the drooping flame in his heart and the long shadows reaching down from heaven into his domain. Mickey was the last to go,

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Mickey Flynn, whom he had first vanquished and then raised to power.

"So long," said Mickey, with averted eyes.
"See you t'morrow."

Children grow quickly tired of their games. When the dark draws down, great adventures cease, and small adventurers turn home. . . .

"See you t'morrow," said Mickey, and slipped away.

But if you are the King, you must not grow tired. You must hold fast to your Dreams, and have faith. The King looked upon his departing Captain's back and trumped up a smile.

"To-morrow!" called the King.

He turned, choking with loneliness—and found himself gazing into the loyal blue eyes of little Maggie.

X

LITTLE MAGGIE ORDERS CHOCOLATE.—COSTLY PURCHASE OF A RED-PLUSH CRUTCH

THEY stood by the heap of wooden swords, alone in a world of dimming light and hushing sound. The day was only a blur of gold above the crowding roofs. The voices of the street had fallen to a low murmur. Strong odors of cooking filled the air. It was supper-time in O'Connor's Alley.

"Are *you* hungry?" asked the Queen, softly.

"Not s' very."

The King put his hands in his pockets, which is always comforting, and kicked apathetically at a stone.

"I know where anybody can get ice-cream cones, two for a nickel," observed Maggie, as one who shoots an arrow aimlessly into the air.

The King removed his hands from his pockets and looked at the lame Queen with awakened interest. In the matter of entrancing ideas she was worth the rest of his empire put together.

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"Where?"

"Just around the corner, at John the Candyman's."

"Come on," said the King. "I'm hungry now."

They crept out of the shadowy back yard into a street for once empty of its hordes. Now, high above the chimney-tops a star-hemmed patchwork sky showed faintly pink and gold and lavender—a poor man's quilt flung by a poor man's God over the roofs of the beggar city. So faint was the light that John the Candyman had touched off his whining, weak-flamed oil-lamp, whose indefinite finger flicked this way and that in the breeze, as though beckoning the chance pedestrian to sample the wares upon which it laid a tarnished glory.

John the Candyman was the proud proprietor of a stand which devoted itself impartially to chewing-gum, newspapers, tobacco, sweets, poisonous rainbow-colored liquids, and a certain species of ice-cream which in a former incarnation had been closely related to the genus cornstarch. But the poor are not particular save as to price, and John the Candyman had a gift for prices.

Drawn by the beckoning finger of light, the

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two adventurers drew close to the counter. A row of glittering faucets showed from the rear of the stand. Below them stood bottles filled with the nectar of the gods. But these temptations were too obviously arranged for the allurements of the uninitiated. Your true epicurean demands the hidden delicacy, the unadvertised bargain.

"Two ice-cream cones," demanded Maggie, and added, prudently, "for a nickel."

John the Candyman produced two brown cones from the magic recesses below the counter. Then, brandishing in his right hand a huge pewter spoon, he leaned toward them, suavely smiling.

"Chocolat' or—*vanilla*?"

The first word was pronounced with a slurring contempt; the second with a lingering rapture. Evidently, in the Candyman's estimation, *vanilla* was the thing to choose. The selection of chocolate (one deduced) would brand the purchaser inevitably as a person of low tastes and bourgeois palate. The shameful truth was that John the Candyman made a greater profit from *vanilla* than from chocolate, the latter requiring a certain muddy-colored matter which depressed his dividends. But in the present instance, alas!

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he was dealing with a member of the contrary sex.

"We'll have chocolate," said Maggie, firmly.

So they had chocolate, much to the Candyman's chagrin, and the King, drawing out his money-bag, deposited five bright pennies upon the bare wooden counter. He counted them aloud, secure in the knowledge that he could have counted as high as ten. For the first time in his life the King rejoiced that he had been provided with a mathematical education. . . .

Having paid their score, Maggie and the King stood side by side in the friendly glitter of the colored bottles and silently consumed the fruits of their extravagance. The patchwork quilt faded out of the heavens above them. The Candyman's single light flowered over their heads like a little soiled star, fallen into the street by reason of some reprehensible human appetite.

"Mine's done," said Maggie, with a sigh.

"So's mine."

They turned back toward the mouth of the Alley, walking slowly, sobered by the thought that such delight should have fled so soon.

"Maggie," said the King, "I'd like to buy something that you could keep always."

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The Queen stopped short and faced him.

"Oh!" she whispered.

"Something that you want—like the Red-Plush Crutch—or something."

A sudden choking sob caused him to glance up in dismay. Queen Maggie of the green country was crying, there in the open street.

"Don't you want it?" asked the King, feeling somehow that he had made a dreadful mistake.

Maggie nodded fiercely, dashing the tears from her eyes.

"I want it," she said, in a low, tense voice, "so they won't laugh at me any more. They wouldn't laugh if I had that—because it's *pretty*, for a crutch."

Her eyes were burning brightly in the dusk. The traces of tears had vanished.

"There's red plush on top," she said, "and shiny paint all over. It's just—grand! I thought maybe last Chris'mus— Oh, I wanted it so!"

"Then why did you cry?" asked the King from the depths of a purely masculine bewilderment.

"Because," said little Maggie.

They walked in silence toward the corner.

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The King was still pondering his companion's reply, finding himself baffled, as many another of his sex has been, by that brief, mysterious word. Suddenly Maggie caught his arm in a convulsive grasp.

"Look!" she breathed.

In a window, decorated by every known species of human bauble, from dusty violins to gleaming daggers, from cuff-links to accordions, from stuffed birds to statued saints, stood the Red-Plush Crutch. It dominated the window, rising elegantly from a nest of miscellaneous articles, in shape graceful, in complexion smoothly polished, in embellishment richly aristocratic. It *was* pretty, for a crutch. There was an air of luxury about it, of elegance overcoming pathos, of refinement leavening disability; in short, of spirit triumphing over flesh.

A light still burned in the pawn-shop. Boris Maxman, owner of the Red-Plush Crutch and of many another mysterious treasure, kept perennial business hours. There was a legend in the Alley that he possessed the secret of a mysterious pill which relieved him of the necessity for sleep. . . .

"Isn't it beautiful?" whispered Maggie, her nose against the window-pane.

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"Best I ever saw," agreed the King, with the air of a connoisseur of crutches.

"No one could ever buy it," said Maggie, in a tone of hopeless conviction. Nor to her mind did it seem as though any one ever could. Priceless are the objects of the heart's desire!

But the King that day had financed the purchase of an empire. He was not to be put off thus easily by a Red-Plush Crutch.

"Bet I could," said he, and strode to the pawn-shop entrance. Little Maggie followed, her heart beating wildly. The King pushed open the door. A shrill bell tinkled unexpectedly. Out of the shadows of the shop a little man in a skull-cap came peering and rubbing his hands.

"Ah!" he said, "vat iss it, liddle Nuisances?"

"How much for the Red-Plush Crutch?" asked the King, boldly, though, to tell the truth, he found it shivery business bargaining in such a shadowy shop with such a shadowy little man.

The shopkeeper thrust a snaky hand into the window space, and after some fumbling drew forth the Crutch. In an agony of suspense little Maggie waited while Boris Maxman

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squinted at a small white card dangling from the cross-bar of the treasure.

"It iss two dollars fifty cents," he said, sourly.

Maggie's face whitened. She took a step toward the door. To spend two dollars and fifty cents for mere happiness was absolutely unthinkable. . . .

The King's money-bag fell with a musical jingle upon the glass counter.

"You count it," said the King.

Boris Maxman's snaky hands went out instinctively to the jingling bag. His fingers seemed to find and solve the knot by some uncanny magic in themselves. Then out upon the counter streamed the bright tide of the King's fortune.

"Bennies!" growled the Jew.

Maggie plucked at the King's sleeve.

"Come away," she whispered. "He's mad at us. He—"

The King looked squarely up at the unpleasant little shopkeeper.

"Take how much it is," he said. "I can only count up to ten."

The wraith of a smile flickered over the Jew's sharp features. He began to claw at the pennies, arranging them in neat piles and mut-

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tering as he did so. Suddenly he paused in the count and stared at little Maggie.

"Iss it for you the crutch?"

"Yes," replied Maggie, faintly.

"Maybe it iss too big for you. Then I should haf all my troubles for nothing."

Maggie tucked the Red-Plush Crutch under her arm and took a few steps about the shop. Then she laughed, shyly.

"It's just right," she said.

As a matter of fact it was not just right; but what is a half-inch or so, compared to red plush on top and shiny paint all over? Indeed, Maggie had been aware of this slight discrepancy from the first, having measured her treasure from the front of the window by holding her old crutch against the glass. But he who reckons happiness by half-inches misses it by half-miles.

The Jew returned to his counting.

"There iss nod enough," said he. "There iss here only two dollars twenty-von cents."

Not enough! The unexpected verdict fell with cruel force upon the ears of Maggie and the King. The world took on its wonted atmosphere of drab, monotonous disappointment. There was no such thing as dreams come true, after all. Not enough!

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"Iss this all the bennies you got, liddle Nuisances?"

The King nodded. He could not trust himself to speak.

"All right," said the Jew, gruffly. "The crutch iss sold for two dollars twenty-von cents. Get oudt."

"You mean it's mine?" cried little Maggie, beginning to tremble from head to foot.

"Sold!" said the shopkeeper. "Don't you know vat iss? Get oudt. I will keep the old crutch in partial payment. . . ."

The door closed behind them. The little bell tinkled softly. They stood in the dark entranceway, dazed by the unexpected success of their apparently hopeless venture.

"You haven't a penny left," said little Maggie, turning to the King.

"I don't care. It weighed down my pockets, anyway."

Before he could forestall the disaster, little Maggie had flung her arm about his neck and kissed him fairly on the cheek.

"I love you! I love you!" whispered little Maggie.

The King drew back, tingling with strange emotions, his face hot, his mind confused.

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"I—I guess I'd better be going now," said the King, stepping out upon the sidewalk.

At that moment a very large woman in a gingham apron came puffing about the corner, peering into doorways with anxious eyes, a great spoon (of which she was apparently unaware) in her hand. She approached the pawnshop rapidly, waving the spoon, breathing hard. Suddenly she stopped short with a cry.

"Little Maggie! Saints be praised! Where have ye been, and what are ye doin' out so late—?"

There are moments in every monarch's life when retreat seems not only prudent, but also highly desirable. The King caught up the Tin Sword, turned, and fled into the night.

XI

IN WHICH THE KING ENJOYS THE HOSPITALITY OF
A VERY GOOD BAD WOMAN AND EATS HIS
DINNER WRONG END TO

NOW as he ran it seemed that Something ran with him, just at his shoulder, as those unspeakable Somethings run in dreams. He knew that if he stopped and turned about, it would not be there—which made him run all the faster. He was only a little boy, now, and the dark was down. Strange lights flowered through the dusk—lights that confused rather than cleared the way. The blurred buildings seemed to stoop like shabby giants, leering at him with their many eyes. The street lamps cast yellow pools at his feet. A door swung open and a great figure reeled out, laughing uproariously and groping with its hands. It was that terror of the streets, a Drunken Man.

The King stopped with a frightened gasp, turned, and ran wildly in the opposite direction.

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The Something at his shoulder had now become a Laugh, with Hands. . . .

Then, still furiously exercising the genius in his heels, the King came suddenly against a woman's skirt. It was a chance refuge, but he clung to it desperately. The woman, leaning down, peered into his face with startled eyes.

It was the Bad Woman.

"Why," she said in a choked whisper, "it's little Galahad!"

The King shook his head. "It's me," he said. Then tightening his grip upon the tawdry skirt, he added, all in a breath, "There was a Drunken Man. . . . Please take me home with you."

This to a Bad Woman, who put one hand to her breast and stared down at him . . . and stared down at him.

"Lord! If I only could! If I only dared! One night!"

Then she straightened up and laughed, a hard, grim little laugh that seemed to be turned dagger-wise against her own heart.

"I'll take you home to your mother," said the Bad Woman, brusquely, "to your mother. . . ."

"I haven't any," said the King.

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"Ah!"

With a swift, half-frightened glance up and down the street the Bad Woman bent over him.

"You heard what they called me," she said, quite as though she had been talking to a grown-up. "Aren't you afraid of a Bad Woman?"

It was a delicate question, but as between a Bad Woman and a Laugh with Hands, the Bad Woman had all the better of it.

"I am not afraid," said the King.

So they went quietly through the unmentionable byway, the King and the Bad Woman, his hand in hers. Once a man lurched out of the shadow, stared into the woman's face, and would have put his hand on her arm, but she thrust him aside with such a gesture of loathing that he reeled away. After that she kept her arm across her face and hurried, hurried until the King's legs ached with the effort to keep up with her. They came to a certain door, and turned in. . . .

A flight of stairs lifted sharply underfoot, with a flimsy handrail to safe-guard the guests of the night. It was precarious going, at best, but the King was too sleepy and tired and hungry

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(despite the ice-cream cone) to worry about this Stygian progress. He clung to the Bad Woman's hand, stumbling up through the dark.

Then he heard the click of a key in a lock. A dim oblong of light appeared, and through this they went very softly into a little room. . . .

"Wait where you are until I find the gas-jet," said the Bad Woman in a whisper. Then: "You're not afraid, are you, Galahad?"

"I'm hungry," replied the King.

He heard her laugh very gently. Soon a tiny fan of flame unfolded against the wall, brushing back the shadows and giving to a Bad Woman's room the betrayal of light. The King, glancing about, saw only a yellow bureau beside the shabby curtained window, a rocking-chair, a small table, and a bed. An old and very sad carpet covered the floor. The wall held a cheap print or two. At the rear of the room hung a faded red curtain which, being half drawn aside, disclosed a small stove, a sink, and a few improvised shelves. Such was a Bad Woman's room.

Turning down the gas so that it burned without whining, the King's hostess put aside her hat and smiled the smile of a woman who is about to provide sustenance for the young male of the species.

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"What do you usually have for supper?" she asked.

"Ice-cream," said the King, "and chocolate cake and—gum-drops."

It was the best that he could do, offhand.

The Bad Woman did not seem in the least taken aback by this unusual selection.

"In that case," she said, "I will have to run down to the corner. It is so hard to keep ice-cream this warm weather. I often find I haven't a bit in the house. You won't be frightened if I leave you for a few minutes, will you?"

"No," said the King. He would have dared more than solitude for ice-cream and chocolate cake.

The Bad Woman drew the rocking-chair close to the window.

"You can sit here," she said, "and watch for me."

So the King sat in a Bad Woman's room, his good sword across his knees, and let his head rest comfortably against the back of the chair. And whatever ghosts peered out at him from the shadows drew back again, ashamed. For the guests of that room were not accustomed to sit with such a light on their hair nor such a knightly sword across their knees. . . .

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The Bad Woman went directly to the pawnshop of Boris Maxman, broker of despair. The single light still flickered in the dark bowels of the shop, caricaturing the Jew against his own wall. He spread his hands, and the light painted the gesture large against the dim shelves. It might have been a scene in the Inferno, at the end of the world, and this the final gesture of the Conqueror. . . .

"So," said the little shopkeeper, with a wry smile, "it iss the liddle diamond—at last."

A pawnbroker knows better than a priest just how desperate are the circumstances of his parishioners. He knows all the little intimate runs and flourishes of their lives; how they plunge this way and that to escape the nets that Fate has drawn for them. He knows how Poverty drives her game from hedge to hedge, from thicket to thicket. And it seems he knows by some occult prescience just how many hedges and thickets there are before the quarry comes out into the open, snarling, at bay. His mind is stocked with pitiful inventories of personal and household treasures. He knows the first sacrifice and the last. He knows when to-day's heirloom will be to-morrow's loaf; when this week's trinket will be next week's debauch.

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And so he knew about the Bad Woman's little diamond.

He knew that it represented her beggar's portion of happiness; that it stood for the few precious moments in her life. A Bad Woman's past is the world's property (privacy being strictly the reward of virtue!). Hence Boris Maxman knew that a man had once given her this ring—and no other; that he had bestowed upon her the conventional promissory diamond and never the ring of gold that keeps a woman safe from the edged tongues of Respectability. . . .

The Bad Woman smiled back across the dusty glass case, vaguely aglitter with its wealth of unredeemed pledges.

"I only want a little," she said, "a few dollars—say ten—no, fifteen! Fifteen dollars for a ring worth a hundred! Is it a bargain?"

Without a word, the Jew opened his greasy wallet and laid the soiled green bills upon the counter, thereby partly clouding the glitter of the unredeemed pledges below. The Bad Woman extended her hand and the ring fell tinkling upon the glass, agleam with her only happiness. . . .

"It iss full of flaws," grumbled the Jew, as a matter of course. But he knew that he had got

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the best of the bargain. It was his business to get the best of all bargains.

The Bad Woman turned, with a quick, in-drawn breath, and slipped quietly away. Armed with her wealth, she invaded in turn a delicatessen shop and a small confectionery establishment, both of which were accustomed to remain open until the neighborhood had retired to its warm-weather couches on roof and fire-escape. Then she fled back to her small guest, the purchases clutched to her breast.

She had planned to call out to him from the stairs, but the silence frightened her and she ran swiftly to the door, fearful that she would find him gone. On the threshold of the room she paused, with tightening throat and blurring eyes.

The King sat by the window, fast asleep, his head fallen forward and his cheek on his hand. The Tin Sword lay across his knees, gleaming dully in the gaslight . . . and there was another light on his hair.

The Bad Woman went softly across the room and, dropping to her knees, placed one arm about his shoulders, and kissed him.

"Look, Galahad," she whispered. "See what I've brought you!"

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The King, by a considerable effort, opened one eye and gazed at the Bad Woman's purchases. Then he struggled up, blinking, and, her cheek being near, he patted it in sleepy gratitude.

"I think," said the King, "that you're a very good Bad Woman."

The very good Bad Woman got hastily to her feet, brushing at her eyes, and began to make ready for the feast.

"Come help me, Galahad," she said, "or you'll fall asleep again."

So the King, heavy with drowsiness, tumbled down from the chair, and together they arranged the table. She, meanwhile, had raided her modest larder of a cold chop and half a loaf of bread.

"I suppose that we should begin with the bread and the chop," said the Bad Woman, doubtfully surveying the eccentric menu.

"I always begin with the ice-cream," said the King, "because if I didn't I might not have room for it. . . ."

This argument being unanswerable, the King was forthwith provided with a spoon and the banquet proceeded, wrong end to; but it was a tremendously successful banquet, for all that.

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Indeed, we might all do well to eat our dinners backward now and then. It would give us something to be thankful for when we returned to the saner program of bread and meat first.

So the King ate of the sweets of this world; and the very good Bad Woman sat with a smile on her face and pretended to partake of the feast. But whether she tasted any sweet I cannot say.

And after the revolutionary repast was concluded, the very good Bad Woman sat down in the chair by the window and took the King in her arms. . . .

XII

THOUGHTS OF A BAD WOMAN, SPOKEN ALOUD.—
HOW ONE DOES NOT CARE WHEN ONE'S
ARMS ARE EMPTY

*"Little hands that beat the pane—
Little whispers in the rain—
Baby, baby, is it you,
Peering in at me again?"*

I CANNOT say how the Bad Woman came by this song, nor do I pretend that she sang it well. Her voice, indeed, wavered on the lines and several times faltered into silence. But the King found it a very satisfactory song to go to sleep to. . . .

A slight misty rain had begun to patter at the window. Perhaps it was the rain that fetched the song to the Bad Woman's lips. Perhaps it was the King's head in the hollow of her shoulder. One cannot be certain about these things.

By and by the Bad Woman left off singing her odd little song and began to tell the King a

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story. It mattered not the least that the King was asleep, for the Bad Woman was only thinking her thoughts aloud.

"He was just like you . . . yellow hair and blue eyes . . . just like you. He used to sleep in my arms, like this. He was my own. . . . I paid for him. No one knows how much I paid. . . . I was all alone.

"We had a little room with a window, like this. . . . He was dearer because I paid all alone, without a ring on my finger. He was little and laughing, and I was young when I had him. . . . Young!

"If I had gone with him, it would have been better. But I was too young to know, too young to die. . . . It would have been much better.

"I did not think the world would care so much about a ring. But the world did care.

"I had such plans for him, such dreams for him! There was a story I remembered from High School—I was scarcely through the High School when I had him—a story about a Knight, Galahad! That was my name for him. I called him that instead of a real name . . . I did not think that names were so important except to mean love. Now I know that names

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are what the world wants, what the world cares for. . . .

"I had such dreams for him! I used to shut my eyes when he was sleeping in my arms and think of Mary and her Little Boy. . . . I was a fool, but I thought of Mary. I thought that mine . . . might grow up to be like hers . . . to be a Teacher . . . to show the world that names do not count, that only love counts. . . .

"I used to read God's Holy Book with my baby in my arms. I only read the story of Mary and her Son. I read it so often that the Book would fall open at the place. I used to tell him that story, that—and the other. They were alike in my mind, alike to him. Stories that are good are alike. . . . But he died, and they took him out of my arms. And after that I did not care. My arms were so empty. . . .

"I used to sit by the window with that ache in my arms . . . until the pain drove me out into the streets. That was how I came into the streets. And there I learned my world . . . all that is bitter of it. And I know now that it cannot live as it is. There is too much bitterness . . . too much caring about rings and names . . . too much not caring about love. The world must change to live!"

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The burden in the Bad Woman's arms stirred and muttered sleepily. She brushed her hand across her eyes and gazed down at him. Suddenly a new look came over her face, a look of fierce exultation, of tremulous wonder. . . .

"Galahad!" she whispered, shaking him, "Wake up! Listen!"

The King's eyes opened slowly.

"Listen!" said the Bad Woman. "Perhaps God has relented a little. Perhaps He has sent you . . . this one night. Are you awake?"

The yellow head nodded drowsily.

"The world must change . . . and you must begin with the children. Remember that, oh, remember that always. Say it after me: 'You must begin'"—

"Must begin," repeated the King, yawning prodigiously.

"With the children."

"With—the—children."

His head dropped back against the pillowing shoulder. His eyelids closed. One hand unclasped itself from the hilt of the Tin Sword and, stealing up, fastened upon the cheap lace at the Bad Woman's breast.

He did not waken when she undressed him; and so did not see her go softly to the yellow

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bureau and take therefrom a diminutive white nightdress, creased and wrinkled from long disuse.

Midnight found her kneeling by the bed, her arms about the white-clothed figure of the sleeping King, her cheek against his cheek. . . .

XIII

IN WHICH MISS PHILOMENA GLANCES SIDELONG
AT A BISHOP, AND THE DOCTOR CREATES
ONE OF HIS SCENES

“**M**Y dear Miss Van Zandt, may I offer a suggestion?”

The unexpected fat Bishop sat upon the extreme edge of one of Miss Philomena's library chairs, placed the tips of his fingers precisely together, and smiled benevolently upon his hostess. It was before breakfast of the second day of the Conference. The other guests, because of the weakness of their flesh in the matter of early rising, were not yet down.

Under ordinary circumstances the Bishop would have confessed to a like weakness. But to-day he had risen at seven, having been prodded out of bed by the relentless nagging of a great idea. The Bishop's ideas were continually bullying him about, and this one had been particularly tyrannical. Descending the stairs to the library, he had found Miss Philomena

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seated at her desk, going over the minutes of the previous day's meeting and arranging her program for the final session of the Conference, which was to be held directly after breakfast. The Bishop was leaving at noon for the West (where he had important engagements) and he earnestly desired to sow the seeds of his inspiration before departure. Hence he lost no time in broaching the matter to his hostess.

At the Bishop's question Miss Philomena abandoned pencil and paper and turned to him with charming graciousness. She was wearing a rose-silk morning-gown which restored, in generous measure, her vanished youth. She looked her best—which she had planned to look.

"As many suggestions as you like, my dear Bishop."

"I—ah—thank you!" The Bishop's round periods came plumping from his round mouth like little bombshells, which when pronounced were calculated to burst with their own importance. "As you doubtless know," he continued, modestly, "I have advocated for some time past a certain reform with regard to the overcrowding of large cities. Perhaps you have seen the volume of my printed sermons called *Trippit on Exodus?*"

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"I have read every word of it," said Miss Philomena, blushing slightly. She did not add that she had purchased the tome only yesterday and had sat up half the night to finish it, with smelling-salts and black coffee. . . .

"Really?" cried the Bishop, beaming upon her. It was the first time that any one had ever showed genuine enthusiasm for *Trippit on Exodus*. "Then you already know my ideas upon the subject."

"You believe," replied Miss Philomena in the tone of one who has crammed up for a quiz, "that the city should be transferred into the country."

"Hm! Not precisely. And yet, I dare say that would be a fair summary of the doctrine. Of course," continued the Bishop, with a scholarly contraction of the brows, "my remedy applies only to the surplus population, by which I mean those persons who cannot afford to live *decently* in the city. The Poor—"

"Ah, the Poor!" sighed Miss Philomena, compassionately.

The Bishop's plump countenance took on a rare melancholy.

"It is to them," said he, "that I address *Trippit on Exodus*."

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For the life of her Miss Philomena could not repress a desire to smile. She had paid \$3.50 for her copy of *Trippit on Exodus*, and the clerk at Brentano's had assured her that it was to be had only in the *de luxe* edition. Hastily she returned to the original subject of this discourse.

"You were about to offer a suggestion?"

"I—ah—quite so! As I understand your procedure, it is the custom of the Conference each year to adopt a Resolution embodying its attitude upon current reforms. I believe this Resolution is given to the press for publication throughout the country?"

"The press," said Miss Philomena, "has been most generous."

The worthy lady spoke feelingly. She was deeply grateful to the press for the flattering amount of space which it bestowed periodically upon the United Charities' Resolution.

Each year the Conference, in solemn conclave assembled, pledged itself to some Utopian reform, such as More Homes for Wayward Girls, Suppression of Crime Films in Motion-Picture Theaters, or Free Baths for the Poor. Of course, these reforms were not always carried out; indeed, they usually got no farther than the newspapers. But, as Miss Philomena

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said, the main thing was to *advocate* them and in that way arouse public opinion to a sense of its social responsibilities. It was only necessary for the United Charities to point out the way, and public opinion would at once fling itself into the breach. In time, Miss Philomena and her colleagues came to regard the annual Resolution almost as an amendment to Holy Writ, a view in which they were greatly encouraged by the attitude of the newspapers. Miss Philomena did not know that the newspapers would have printed her dinner-menu, her love-letters, her recipe for plum pudding, her favorite cure for sunburn, her views on Browning, her wedding notice, her divorce, her obituary, her will, and her family history with the same avidity and prominence which they displayed in the publication of the Resolution signed by her name. But no woman of Miss Philomena's station in life may ever hope to understand a newspaper. Hence, to her mind, the Resolution was a matter which (in all humility) the world could not well do without.

"I was about to suggest," said the unexpected Bishop, "that you adopt for your Resolution this year—Subdivision Four, Chapter Six, of *Trippit on Exodus*."

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"What!" exclaimed Miss Philomena, with a start.

The Bishop drew a folded paper from the recesses of his clerical vestments.

"Last night before retiring I took the liberty of drawing up a tentative Resolution—one which embodies the main points of Subdivision Four. That section, you will remember, is devoted to the 'Relief of Cities'—"

"Splendid!" cried Miss Philomena, so heartily that the Bishop jumped in his chair. It had dawned upon her with startling suddenness that the adoption of the famous Bishop's doctrines would be a brilliant *coup*. Not only would it lend added dignity to the Resolution, but also would provide a certain halo of importance for her own head. (She would show Doctor MacLean—the pagan!—that she was no mere charitable dabbler.)

"If you have no objection, I shall present Subdivision Four to the Conference at the morning session."

"My dear Bishop," said Miss Philomena, giving him a daring sidelong glance, "I should be delighted to have you do so!"

Now to a young miss in her 'teens, Miss Philomena's fluttering sidelong glance might not

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have seemed in the slightest degree daring. But for a maiden lady with ideals to glance side-long at a Bishop is in its very essence bold.

"Dear lady!" said the fat Bishop.

He leaned forward until the relations between himself and his chair were perilously strained, and laid his hand upon Miss Philomena's slim fingers. The caress, if such it may be called, was purely ecclesiastical. Yet it fetched a becoming color to Miss Philomena's cheek, induced a certain hoarseness in the Bishop's voice.

"Permit me," said the Bishop, a trifle huskily, "to thank you."

Miss Philomena gently withdrew her fingers.

"I am grateful for the suggestion," she murmured.

But the Bishop would not have it so. It was he who was grateful; grateful for Miss Philomena's sympathy; grateful for her interest in *Trippit on Exodus*; grateful for her charming friendliness; grateful for the fact that she looked her best at eight o'clock in the morning.

"I regret, I deeply regret that I must leave so precipitately—"

"You go at noon?"

"Yes."

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"Is there no later train?"

"Not until six, and that, I fear, is out of the question."

Miss Philomena bowed to the inexorableness of the Bishop's engagements in the West, and reached for the ancient bell-pull.

"Let me order the brougham for you," she said in a tone which indicated that she wished to lighten, as far as possible, the Bishop's mortal burdens.

"No, no!" protested the Bishop. But when Simms appeared in the doorway he submitted passively to the arrangements made for his comfort. Indeed, the Bishop was never one to scorn the joys of being made comfortable. He might have taken the six-o'clock train well enough, but for the fact that it could not be induced to yield him a drawing-room.

"Please telephone the garage, Simms, and tell Barker that I shall want the car this morning."

"Very good, ma'am. At what time, ma'am?"

"At what time?" asked Miss Philomena, turning to the Bishop with that air of indecision which so becomes a woman.

"I—ah!— Shall we say eleven-thirty?"

"Eleven-thirty, sir. Very good, sir."

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Simms departed with solemn tread. Once more the Bishop leaned forward in his chair. His gratitude had increased by leaps and bounds.

"I find myself at a loss," said the Bishop, warmly, "to express to you my pleasure, my satisfaction, at having met so advanced a spirit—"

Miss Philomena inclined her head. Above all things, she desired to be thought advanced. She made a mental note to tell her pagan Doctor what the Bishop had said.

"I have long realized," the Bishop went on, "that my doctrines were ahead of the times. I have been forced to battle against Ignorance, superstition, indifference! I have suffered as those suffer who seek to carry the Light into places of accustomed darkness. But now—"

"Now?"

The word had popped out before Miss Philomena could close her lips against it.

"Now I have found a kindred soul, one who understands my work, one who understands—me! You, of all the hundreds—perhaps I should say thousands, who have read *Trippit on Exodus*, have discovered its true message. You wish to incorporate that message in your Res-

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olution! You place your standard beside mine! Hereafter we shall be fellow-soldiers in the battle against Ignorance! We shall go forward toward the Light, hand in hand—”

The fat Bishop had rather overdone himself in the matter of his bombshells. This last burst into a delicate *double entendre* which brought a deeper crimson to Miss Philomena's cheek. As for the Bishop, a wholly unclerical boldness laid strict injunction upon his tongue. He permitted that somewhat amorous picture of himself and Miss Philomena going hand in hand toward the Light to stand, to brighten, to dry into a golden frame of silence. Miss Philomena, scanning the portrait with fascinated inward vision, felt the temperature of her blushes to increase.

A maid entered and announced that the guests were down. Miss Philomena sighed and rose from her chair.

“The guests are down,” said she, unconsciously repeating the maid's formal announcement. The Bishop also rose from his chair.

“The guests are down,” said the Bishop, and sighed.

Miss Philomena, for no apparent reason, put out her hand. The Bishop took it in his own,

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giving it a slight and eminently ecclesiastical pressure. Then, by common impulse, they both turned to the door (rather too hastily) and composed their countenances for the ordeal of the descending guests. But before them, still brightly traced, floated that rosy vision of themselves going hand in hand toward the Light. . . .

Probably no other house in New York that morning could have boasted such an array of virtuous excellence as was gathered about Miss Philomena's breakfast-table. It represented many of the most important charities in the East (and several of the best families). The persons composing it were, with one exception, excruciatingly respectable; righteous (by tradition), orthodox (because comfortable), and extremely serious-minded. The one exception was Dr. Peter MacLean, who, though not a member of the Conference, invariably was asked to attend its sessions. He had dropped in for breakfast according to custom, and was now engaged in an abstemious repast of dry toast and hot water. Ostensibly the Doctor was present in his capacity of expert sociologist, but underlying this reason was Miss Philomena's desire to show him that she was an important person, after all. . . .

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Miss Philomena, firmly established behind a glittering percolator, and looking very lovely in her rose silk, presided at the head of the table. Upon her right hand sat the plump Bishop, who pursued the pleasant occupation of making himself plumper. The alluring vision of his progress toward the Light did not in the least interfere with his appetite. Nothing interfered with the Bishop's appetite, visions least of all.

Seated upon the Bishop's right, biting vigorously at a roll, was that most authoritative Christian, Mrs. T. Herbert Horn, of Brooklyn. One always spoke of her thus. She was not Mrs. Horn of New York, or Lenox, or Hot Springs (where she went every autumn for the baths). She was Mrs. T. Herbert Horn, of Brooklyn. One could imagine Brooklyn parting with the Borough Hall sooner than with Mrs. T. Herbert Horn. The Horn mansion had stood upon the Brooklyn Heights for half a century, and from her boudoir window Mrs. T. Herbert possessed the unique privilege of looking down upon the larger part of Manhattan. Her view had in time become her viewpoint. She felt a refined contempt for the roaring rude island across the Bridge. Yet her friendship for Miss

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Philomena led her once a year to spend a night in the tents of the enemy. This night she had just spent, and quite healthily, too, by the look of her radiant countenance.

The Rev. John Ramie, of Boston, occupied the place next to Mrs. T. Herbert Horn. Doctor Ramie wore great shell-rimmed spectacles, had a long neck, and looked as though he might have been the intermediary between the Lowells and the Almighty in the immortal verse where:

The Cabots speak to the Lowells,
And the Lowells speak only to God.

Doctor Ramie was a very solemn gentleman who had a notion that humor was not quite moral. He came of a family, was graduated from Harvard, and spoke in a hushed voice of his work among the ma-a-sses. He represented the Boston Guild.

Beside Doctor Ramie, and apparently unaffected by that gentleman's pervading gloom, sat Miss Estabelle Jones, a tall, thin, almost bird-like person, with temperamental eyes and an air of always looking on the bright side. Miss Jones wrote poetry imploring the world to leave off its dollar-chasing and seek the Truth. Miss Jones herself was quite unhampered in her pur-

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suit of Truth by reason of a half-interest in a gas company which paid ten-per-cent. dividends, an interest left her by Jones *père*, who had been exceedingly clever about such matters. But, on the other hand, Miss Jones devoted the entire proceeds of her poetic sales, which sometimes totaled fifty dollars a year, to charity.

Mr. Lawrence Love, of the Philadelphia Sunshine Society, and Mr. Will Winberry, of the Providence Charities Aid, may be coupled in the same paragraph. They were of a type, medium-sized, spare, rather drooping gentlemen whose collars did not quite fit their throats, and whose hair habitually wanted brushing. Mr. Love was light; Mr. Winberry, dark. Otherwise they might have been cast from the same mold.

As for the shocking Doctor, Miss Philomena had once said that his face reminded her of the Maine coast, and Mrs. Horn had added, sentimentally, "The day after a storm!" It was a face of rugged strength, with wide-set, clear, gray eyes, a nose straight and sensitive, a mouth almost sardonically grim—just the sort of a mouth, indeed, which one would expect a pagan to possess. Miss Philomena never looked at the Doctor's mouth but she saw barbed blasphemies hatching there.

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He sat now at the foot of the table, consuming his toast and hot water, his massive head bent forward over his plate, one sandy eyebrow slightly cocked above the other, the picture of sardonic and stony middle-age. There was but one known weakness in the Doctor's character, and that an overweening fondness for children. He often said that the only people he took seriously were those under twelve years of age. Hence it was almost inevitable that he should glance suddenly at his hostess and say:

"Where's that boy of yours, Philomena? I declare, I haven't seen him since I arrived. Last year he almost put my eye out with a popgun. I miss him."

Miss Philomena gave a guilty start. In the excitement of the Bishop's arrival, in the rush of charitable business, in the manipulation of guests, in the actual work of the Conference itself, Miss Philomena had utterly forgotten her Lesser Charity. She had intended to telephone the Holland House the night before, but somehow—there had been so much on her mind. . . . Suddenly Miss Philomena's glance met the Doctor's slightly mocking eyes and she realized that she had not answered the latter's question.

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"He is spending a few days with his govern-ess," said Miss Philomena, striving to speak casually, though her conscience pricked, "as a sort of lark, you know."

"Too bad, too bad," growled the Doctor in his great, rumbling voice. "He was worth talking to, that boy. I'm disappointed."

He glanced about the table to see who else was disappointed. But the others continued solidly to pursue their material wants. They were not disappointed in the least. Secretly, they considered themselves in on the lark.

"How old—ah!—is the boy?"

The plump Bishop was gazing directly at Miss Philomena, a vast spoonful of breakfast food held poised before his half-opened mouth, a distinctly shocked expression upon his cherubic countenance. He had always understood that Miss Philomena was a maiden lady of no immediate family.

"He is just eight," said Miss Philomena, with some confusion, "a most difficult age."

"And a most interesting one!" boomed the Doctor. He addressed himself to the Bishop. "Miss Van Zandt hauled the little beggar out of the public pound when he was a baby. I've always considered that a splendid thing!

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To take a child out of the gutter and give him a chance—you can't beat that, sir."

Now the plump Bishop did not want to beat that. It so happened that he had never cared particularly for children.

"A fine thing, surely," said the Bishop, swallowing his breakfast food, "but not to be compared, in my estimation, with the—ah—work that Miss Van Zandt has done in the propagation of *ideas*, in the sympathetic encouragement of great reforms."

"The rescue of a single child," said the Reverend Doctor Ramie, of Boston, "is, *per se*, of negligible value. It is, if Miss Van Zandt will pardon me, a pleasing sentimentality not to be compared with the larger service of uplifting mankind. Such a service must be expressed largely in the abstract—"

"I agree," interrupted Mr. Love and Mr. Winberry, simultaneously. Then each surveyed the other with a look of pained reproach. They were forever saying things like that. They seemed to be born to an identity of thought. So perfectly mated were their mental processes, indeed, that neither had ever been known to echo the other. They came out with their profundities precisely in unison.

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"Besides," said Mrs. T. Herbert Horn, firmly, "children do better if you let them alone. Look at those Italian babies. They fairly thrive on dirt."

"It's their *environment*," murmured Miss Jones, the poetess, sitting back in her chair and gazing at the ceiling. A moment later she took out a small pad and pencil and began to write among the grape-fruits, her head propped upon her hand. . . .

"I myself have always thought," said Miss Philomena, "that one's chief duty was to the millions, and not to the individual."

"Stuff and nonsense!" roared the shocking Doctor, half rising from his chair. "It's the individual that counts, and you know it, or you're not Christians. How many millions d'you think it would take to outweigh the importance of one Christ?"

The silence of pained embarrassment fell upon the breakfast-table. The Doctor was creating one of his dreaded scenes! Earnest churchfolk though they were, there was not a person at the board who did not feel slightly uncomfortable at the mention of the Redeemer's name. It was a name which belonged exclusively to Sunday services, to a definite hour

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upon a definite day; not to the unpremeditated talk of the breakfast-table!

The Doctor was not done with his scene as yet.

"Infernal habit," he growled, "this thinking of human beings as a mass. Why, you'll never do anything in a charity way till you've learned to think of them as individuals like yourselves. I'd be ashamed, if I professed to be a follower of your Lord Christ, to lump my fellow-men together like a shipment of hogs, spiritual value so much per thousand. It's sheer laziness!

"As for this particular case, suppose that Miss Van Zandt's youngster should turn out to be a second Messiah—and you can't say he won't—which would be more important then, the one man or the millions? And let me tell *you*," added the Doctor, wheeling on the Reverend Doctor Ramie so abruptly as to cause that solemn gentleman to spill his coffee upon the cloth—"let me tell *you* that the salvation of a child is pretty nearly the most important thing in the world. Because the child of to-day is the citizen of to-morrow!"

"But I am concerned with to-day," said Doctor Ramie, blinking through his shell-rimmed spectacles.

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"Then you are twenty-four hours behind the procession," said the Doctor, dryly.

With a haste betraying her agitation Miss Philomena rose from the table, thereby bringing to a close both the discussion and the breakfast. But as the guests passed into the library to await the arrival of the less important delegates the Doctor dropped back to his hostess's side.

"Philomena," said he, "I apologize. Ideals at breakfast are inexcusable."

Miss Philomena regarded him with the faint bewilderment that he always aroused in her. She had intended to lecture him, but all that she said was:

"You spoiled my breakfast."

XIV

IN WHICH A PAGAN REJECTS THE ROD OF MOSES
AND THE REVEREND DOCTOR RAMIE
RISES TO AN OCCASION

A CLUSTER of chairs, arranged in prim half-circles, gave Miss Philomena's library an atmosphere of official solemnity which reduced conversation to whispers and prepared the mind for serious thinking. As the members straggled in, this atmosphere descended upon them like a mantle, transforming them from mere human beings into a dignified charitable Conference. The seats in the first row, as always, were reserved for Miss Philomena's house guests. The less important delegates, who arrived in groups of twos and threes, like Cook's tourists, occupied rows slightly to the rear.

At one end of the reserved row sat the plump Bishop, his round face slightly flushed by the recent exertions of a heavy breakfast. The seat at the other end was occupied by the shock-

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ing Doctor, who sat grimly erect, his arms folded across his chest. To a base mind this arrangement might have suggested something in the nature of an ecclesiastical minstrel show—but, happily, there were no base minds present.

A dignified mahogany table, supporting books and papers, fronted the chairs. At this table Miss Philomena took her place and rapped for order, a figurative proceeding merely.

“I will read the minutes of yesterday’s meeting,” announced the President, who had evolved a certain parliamentary procedure of her own. She lifted a gold lorgnette, bent over the papers on the table, and read as follows:

“Meeting called to order at three o’clock P.M. Mrs. T. Herbert Horn, of Brooklyn, read a paper on the work of the Brooklyn Foundation. Miss Jones read a blank-verse poem on the ‘Beauty of Poverty.’ Doctor Ramie spoke of the advisability of educating the Poor to an appreciation of the classics. Mr. Love read statistics compiled during the past year showing that a large percentage of crime is due to alcohol. Mr. Winberry stated that as his paper chanced to be the same as Mr. Love’s, he would not ask for the floor. Doctor MacLean suggested that the City turn its back yards and vacant lots

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into playgrounds for children. Bishop Trippit, whom we were so fortunate as to have with us, delivered an address on 'The Modern Exodus.'" Miss Philomena paused and glanced at the Conference.

"If there are no objections, the minutes will stand as read."

A polite murmur of approval indicated that no objections would be offered. The President closed her lorgnette and leaned forward a trifle, the tips of her fingers just touching the table.

"We now come," said Miss Philomena, "to the adoption of the annual Resolution. This, of course, is the most important part of our program. The newspapers . . . But I need not go into that. I think," continued the President, gravely, "that we should adopt, this year, a totally *new* idea; one that is thoroughly advanced. Suggestions are now in order."

As Miss Philomena concluded, her eye fell as though by chance upon the plump Bishop. A fleeting look passed between them. The Bishop rose, fumbling at the breast of his coat.

"Bishop Trippit!" said Miss Philomena, and seated herself with dignity.

The Bishop bowed as low as nature would permit; then addressed himself impartially to

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all. In his hands he held a folded paper, upon which the eyes of the Conference were fixed with fascinated discomfort.

“Madam President and Delegates to the Conference: Though not a member of your distinguished body, I take—ah—the liberty of offering you a Resolution embracing the subjects upon which I touched at yesterday’s meeting—subjects which you will find more fully treated in Chapter Six, Subdivision Four, of *Trippit on Exodus*. I have already prepared—ah—a tentative paper which, if there are no objections, I will read.”

“There are no objections,” said the President, rather hastily.

The Bishop slowly unfolded the paper, donned a pair of massive eye-glasses, and after some preliminary throat-clearing began to read. The Conference promptly sank into that deferential coma which is the common state of the laity when listening to the clergy; all, that is, except the shocking Doctor, who, as the Bishop proceeded with his wisdoms, drew out note-book and pencil and jotted down certain heresies. . . .

“Whereas,” continued the Bishop, sonorously, “it is the sacred duty of those in authority to smite the waters of Ignorance with the rod

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of Enlightenment, to roll back the seas of Social Darkness, and to deliver the children of Oppression out of their bondage, therefore be it—

“Resolved: That this Conference of United Charities take up the rod of Aaron and Moses; that it devote itself throughout the coming year to the advocacy of the Modern Exodus, and that it strive to lead the Poor of great cities out of the Egypt of the slums to the open country—ah—of the Promised Land!”

A somewhat bewildered, but quite hearty burst of applause greeted the Bishop’s thunderous closing sentence. Then the Conference became painfully aware of the Doctor, standing at his end of the row, his arms folded across his chest, his rugged face more like the coast of Maine than ever before.

“Philomena,” said he, flinging parliamentary courtesies to the four winds, “I would like to offer a Resolution of my own, in contradiction to the Bishop’s.”

The President gazed helplessly at that great rock of a man, then lowered her eyes.

“Doctor MacLean,” she murmured.

The tall Doctor drew out his note-book. Holding this between thumb and forefinger, he faced the author of *Trippit on Exodus*.

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"I have never before preached to a Bishop," rumbled the Doctor, "so I approach my subject with due humility."

The Conference shifted uneasily in its chairs. It found the Doctor's facetiousness uncomfortable to bear.

"The Bishop has suggested that we pick up the slums and carry them bodily into the country." He shot a quizzical glance at Miss Philomena. "Advanced ideas—bah! It's an old cure for an older malady, and it won't work."

The Bishop looked at his towering adversary, puffed out his cheeks, sucked them in again, crossed his plump legs, uncrossed his plump legs, and said nothing.

"It won't work," the Doctor went on, "because it doesn't go to the root of the trouble. We need cities to operate our civilization. They are here to stay. You can't quit them any more than a snail can quit its shell. It's all well enough to talk about Moses, but, as the Bishop knows, Moses did his job by miracles. Unfortunately, the day of miracles is past. The Almighty has left us to shift for ourselves. Humanity must crawl out of its own slime, with the City on its back.

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"What we must do is to make the City worthy of the life it shelters. We must cut away its malicious growths and heal its sores. To do that we must put windows in blank walls, and let in the sun. We must rake over filth, and plant flowers instead. We must abolish the wage slavery of its laborers, and give each man a just interest in his enterprise, as the farmer's tenant is given an interest in his land. We must regulate its progress so that there will be space for playing, and we must, at all costs, keep a garden in the heart of the City, so that our children may know the beauty of the world as it was in the beginning, in order that they may hold in mind forever the distinction between the work of man and the work of God. The Bishop has said that the City should be moved into the country. I offer the following thought instead:

"Resolved: That the country be brought to the City."

And the tall Doctor sat down.

There was an embarrassing silence. Miss Philomena's pagan had rejected the rod of Moses. He had preached to a Bishop. He had raised an issue; in short, had precipitated another scene!

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All eyes were turned to the unhappy President. How would she handle the situation? Would she give her approval to the Bishop's poetical and romantic project of Exodus, or would she declare for the shocking Doctor? By the expression of her countenance, she would do neither.

"Are there — any — further suggestions?" asked the President, weakly.

Obviously there were no more suggestions. The silence deepened. Upon his end of the row the plump Bishop sat stiffly gazing at the ceiling. The Doctor glared rudely at them all, a grim smile warping his lips. . . .

But there is a man for every great crisis, and for this there was the Reverend Doctor Ramie, of Boston. He rose in his place and the cloud of embarrassment rolled away.

"I move," said he, peering over the tops of his spectacles, "that both Resolutions be submitted to the President for her mature consideration, and that she decide for the Conference which shall be declared adopted. Furthermore, I move that her decision be published in the press a month from this date, such decision to receive the unanimous approval of the United Charities."

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"Second the motion," said Mr. Love and Mr. Winberry, in unison.

Miss Philomena looked distractedly at the Conference.

"All in favor—" she ruled, faintly.

"Aye!" said the Conference, in a tone of intense relief.

Miss Philomena, feeling like the grain between the upper and nether millstones, distinctly sighed.

"General business," she said, "is now in order."

Miss Estabelle Jones rose with a modest smile.

"If the members will permit me, I would like to read a little poem that I have just written on 'Environment.'"

XV

BREAKFAST WITH A BAD WOMAN.—COMMON
WEAKNESS OF THE FEMININE CHARACTER
FOR SOAP BEHIND THE EARS.—DE-
PARTURE OF THE KING

THE King awoke by pleasant slow degrees. First a sunbeam touched his eyes, then a fragrance (as of breakfast) assailed his nostrils, and finally a voice, low and tender, propounded close to his ear a question calculated to plumb the very depths of drowsiness:

"Do you like pancakes?"

The King, blinking drowsily, looked up and perceived the very good Bad Woman bending above his pillow.

"With syrup?"

"With syrup."

The defeat of Morpheus from that moment became an utter rout. The King sat bolt-up-right, rubbing his eyes.

"I love 'em."

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"Climb out, then, Galahad. Breakfast is almost ready."

Among the King's proudest accomplishments was the ability to dress himself. This being an especial occasion, he plunged into it at racing speed. Shirt, knickers, and stockings went on with a rush, the very good Bad Woman helping here and there with a refractory button. In less than no time they had reached the blouse, the bow tie, and the vital question of the King's ears.

"I suppose," said the Bad Woman, pouring water from a cracked china pitcher into a cracked china bowl, "that we really must wash them, a little."

The King sighed. There seemed to be inherent in the feminine character a common weakness for Soap behind the Ears. He marched over to the bowl and held up his face, screwing his eyelids shut against the deluge.

"I never have much soap," he said; "it makes my ears ring."

The mistress of ceremonies replied that she quite comprehended the evils of soap, and proceeded to dab at the King's heroically presented countenance with a dripping wash-cloth.

"My neck was washed yesterday."

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The Bad Woman did not hear. Her hand, swathed in the wash-cloth, moved mechanically over the disputed territory of the King's neck. . . . Tears gathered in her eyes; fell unnoticed in the general flood. . . . There was a great pain in the place where her heart should have been. . . .

"I said my neck was washed yesterday!"

She stooped swiftly and kissed the disputed territory, which was not the answer at all. Then she dried the King's face, still wrinkled with a gentleman's agony, and brushed his locks into a semblance of order.

Breakfast followed, totally eradicating from the King's mind the unpleasant memories of Soap behind the Ears. And such a breakfast as it was! Delicious pancakes, piled in delectable stacks! Thick, golden syrup, flowing in slow cataracts from a blue china pitcher! Fresh butter in quantities, adding indescribable succulence to the joy of the 'syrup! Bacon, too, brown and crisp and melting upon the tongue!

As upon the previous night, the King began with the sweets, being resolved to make the most of his freedom. He began with the syrup, which is, of course, against all rules. Ordinarily one is compelled to eat two with butter first.

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But the King began directly with the syrup, which is something in the way of a departure, for pancakes.

Unfortunately, there must be an end to all delights. At last the Bad Woman, having put off this moment as long as possible, looked up from her smoking skillet.

"That's the very last of the batter," she said, and turned to him with a little queer smile.

The King thrust into his mouth a final neat stack of syrupy fragments, emitting at the same time a sigh of perfect repletion. It was not Manners, that sigh, and he knew it. But it expressed better than words the complete satisfaction of his being.

He slipped down from his chair, tugging at the precautionary napkin placed beneath his chin. This was the moment that the Bad Woman had put off as long as she could; the moment that she had fortified herself against, woman-like, with smiles. But her heart was near to breaking. . . .

She had realized that she must pay a price for her little adventure, and now she was paying double and triple, as a Bad Woman always pays. But for all the ache in her breast, she would not have had it otherwise.

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From the bureau she took the Tin Sword, and, kneeling, buckled it about the King's waist. A moment she held him against her heart. . . .

"You go down the stairs," she said, "and then up the passage to the gate in the fence. After that . . ."

Her lips brushed his cheek.

They were very simple directions. The King, fortified by innumerable pancakes, went confidently down the Bad Woman's stairs, now rather unpleasant with the daylight upon them, and out once more into a world of noise and smell and brazen sun. There was no trace of last night's rain.

It was a moment calling for some extreme expression of the soul. Standing in the Bad Woman's doorway, the King puckered his lips and gave vent to a long-drawn, tremulous whistle. Then, with a light heart, he turned the corner of the Bad Woman's shabby castle, and made his way through the narrow lane that led straight to the Gate in the Fence.

XVI

NIGHT THOUGHTS OF A QUEEN.—MICKEY FLYNN
IS REMINDED OF A GREAT ADVENTURE.—
CRITICAL MOMENT IN THE BACK YARD

IF the King had slept that night, the Queen had not. Hour after hour she lay upon her tumble-down cot, staring out at the wilted nose-gay of stars that flecked her bit of heaven. About her, in familiar profusion, slept the smaller brothers and sisters; blurred heaps that moaned in the heat of the summer night. But the Queen lay very still, with wide-open eyes. . . .

Her thoughts were of the Green Country, and the great adventure of to-morrow. At the head of the cot, where she could touch it with her hand, stood the Red-Plush Crutch. That night, for the first time, she had not prayed the Lady Mary to make her well. She was well content to be a lamey.

So she lay staring at the stars—there would be many, many more in the heavens above the

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Green Country—and dreamed of tall trees nodding in the wind; of flowers and splashing fountains; of iron fences brushed away. She dreamed of a boy King, who had come out of Fairyland, with a Sword and a magic Key. How could she doubt that he would come again upon the morrow?

All her life she had been in silent rebellion against a world that seemed, in some incomprehensible way, wrong. Like a wild flower fallen among the weeds of an ugly bog, she had struggled blindly toward sunshine and clean air, toward that beauty which is the natural craving of childhood, of life. She was one of those tiny blossoms—how many there are only an inscrutable Almighty knows—that are sacrificed in the daily miscarriage of civilization. Forced by a fate erroneously supposed to be divine to live in ugliness, in squalor, in continual disappointment, not the less deadening because trivial, she had built herself, with that astonishing courage of childhood, another world of dreams. She had built it instinctively, out of the odds and ends of pretense, bit by precious bit, as the chrysalis builds its shell. Within that imaginary universe she dwelt, rigidly alone, hoping, praying that some day she might emerge a butter-

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fly, with wings to soar and beauty to justify her flights. In that universe nothing was impossible. The wildest dreams came true. The fondest imaginings were fulfilled. Hence she had seen no improbabilities in the King's proposed adventure. Long before his coming she had pitched the tents of a dream in the Forbidden Kingdoms.

The gray ghost of dawn came plucking at the stars; came peering at the window. The day of days was breaking above the roofs of the beggar city, the day when she would emerge a butterfly, a Queen! Already she could feel the crown upon her hair. All past hideousness, all taunts of cruel children, all heartaches, all loneliness, seemed to be swept aside by that advancing tide of light. Her prayers had been answered. Her world had come to rights at last!

She stretched out her hand and touched the Red-Plush Crutch, then laid her cheek against the pillow with a sigh.

An upheaval of smaller O'Connors awoke little Maggie to the realization that it was broad daylight. She jumped out of bed and made her meager toilette in a fever of haste. Breakfast

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she scarcely tasted. There was another wine upon her lips.

"I declare," said Mrs. O'Connor to the prospective Alderman, who sat cooling his coffee at the head of the table, "I never saw little Maggie so happy-lookin'. There's a fair sparkle in her eyes."

"'Tis the thought of bein' daughter to an Alderman," said Mr. O'Connor, modestly.

"Maybe," answered his spouse. Then, in a tone of sudden wistfulness, she asked, "Will ye ever be elected?"

"By the grace of God and the help of me platform, I will!"

"'Twould be a grand thing," said Mrs. O'Connor, turning back to the stove—"a grand thing—"

Perhaps so, Mrs. O'Connor. But it is not the thought of being daughter to an Alderman that brings the sparkle to little Maggie's eyes. Who would be an Alderman's daughter when she might be a Queen?

Once in the street, the Red-Plush Crutch tucked under her arm, little Maggie set about her self-appointed task of gathering up the King's adventurers. Her first concern was for Mickey Flynn. How had the night affected his enthusiasm?

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Resolutely she entered the hallway of a certain unlovely tenement, gray and grim as a prison. It was not long before she heard the feet of the Captain upon the stairs, and his shrill whistle penetrating the depths of the human honeycomb.

"Hello, Mickey Flynn!"

"'Lo!"

"What are you goin' to do to-day?"

The Chief of Staff paused in his headlong flight and stared at the Queen. Then, convinced that some unwarranted demand was to be made upon his time, edged quickly toward the door; but little Maggie clutched his ragged sleeve.

"Aw, I dun'no'," said Mickey. "Have fun, I guess."

"Aren't you goin' to run away?"

A light of sudden recollection dawned in Mickey's eyes. "Gee! I forgot. Where is he now?"

This was a question which had been troubling Maggie's mind for the past hour. But her confidence in the return of the King had never faltered.

"In the back yard," said Maggie, and added, beneath her breath, "I guess." Which, as

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every moralist knows, saved it from being a lie.

"Where 'd ja get the crutch?" asked Mickey, suddenly.

"He bought it."

"I'll bet his old man's got a million dollars."

"More 'n that," said little Maggie, confidently.

The spirit of enthusiasm now glowed warm in Mickey's breast, and with it a renewed sense of his own importance.

"Leave go my arm," said he. "I got to get up the Army."

Five minutes later Mickey Flynn was striding through the grocer's passage with O'Connor's Alley at his heels. At the rear of the procession trotted little Maggie, her face deathly pale, a great fear at her heart. Would the King come in time?

"He ain't here!"

Mickey Flynn, after a brief survey of the back yard, turned and glanced accusingly at the Queen. Immediately suspicion raised its serpent head in the bosoms of the proletariat.

"Yah!" said the elder Levinsky twin, whose manners were not above reproach.

Benny Ernspicker blew a derisive blast upon

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his First-Hand Harmonica. Heinie Schmidt, whom hope had bade to bring his drum, added a gloomy thunder to this bit of musical satire. The younger Levinsky twin, inspired by his brother's doubt, put thumb to nose and wiggled his fingers at the pile of wooden swords. The rest, without exception, thrust out their tongues.

"Aw, gee!" said Mickey, "I bet he ain't comin' at all."

Little Maggie hobbled forward from the ranks. "Yes, he is comin', too, Mickey Flynn," she cried, tears flashing in her eyes. "*I know* he's comin'. I—"

Suddenly she broke off and leveled a quivering forefinger at the Gate in the Fence.

"I told you so!"

The Alley turned as one. There, just emerging from the broken gate, was the King, his sword at his side, the light of the morning on his hair!

XVII

IN WHICH THE ALLEY MARCHES AND A DREAM IS DONE

THERE was a moment's breathless silence. Then a wild cheer swept the back yard. The little chameleons rushed forward with shouts of welcome. The voices of the Levinsky twins were notably lifted in greeting. Small, ragged bodies pressed about the returned hero. Grimy fists pounded his back. The harmonica blew. The drum beat. The wooden swords, snatched hastily from the pile, were brandished in air, but beyond the shrieking circle the King saw little Maggie's face, white with eagerness and longing, and he knew that the great moment was at hand.

"Everybody get in line," he shouted.

The hubbub ceased by degrees. The King's command was repeated through the ranks. The Chief of Staff, now keyed to a high pitch of excitement, went about prodding the Army into

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place, settling spontaneous disputes, quelling isolated duels, and generally bringing order out of chaos. Standing two by two—First Line, Reserves, and Landsturm—the King's host reached quite to the fence—an imposing array!

In the front rank stood the Band, with proud faces, awaiting the word to advance. Then Mickey Flynn placed himself at the head of the line, spat on his hands, and waved his sword on high.

"Forward," cried the King, "March!"

A-rub-a-dub-dub! A-rub-a-dub-dub! Tra, la, la, la, la!

With a crash of falling drumsticks and the shrilling of a First-Hand Harmonica, the adventurers surged forward, swung into step. Out of the mouth of the passageway they came, an army of barefoot infantrymen, of grim-cheeked supernumeraries, of pigtailed atoms clutching still lesser atoms, of a lame Queen, hobbling on a Red-Plush Crutch, of a King without a crown, of a Captain in tatters and patches—

A-rub-a-dub-dub! A-rub-a-dub-dub!

Two by two they wheeled into the turmoil of O'Connor's Alley, not a great company, as armies go, but one, I think, which must have waked some answering echo from the dust of

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the Holy Lands, where the dead Crusaders sleep. . . .

Fairly up the center of the byway trod that Army of Hope, between the freebooting push-carts, through the litter of the day's business, past the gloomy, squalid tenements, heralded in its coming by the throb of a drum and the voice of a First-Hand Harmonica. Pale faces stared from window and doorway, gazing with faint wonder at O'Connor's Alley marching by. Loud-voiced women turned from their morning bargains to see what new disturbance was this; then went back to their eternal petty haggling over prices. . . . It was only the children!

In the van marched the King, as befitted his high estate, the Tin Sword flashing and twirling like a drum-major's baton. A pace to the rear trudged Mickey Flynn, his own blade at the carry, his eyes held unwaveringly to the front. At the heels of the Captain came the Band, already in open rivalry as to the matter of the most noise, but never missing the pulse and swing of the scuffling feet behind them. Benny Ernspicker, as fate would have it, counted but one tune in his entire repertoire, a tune which he had been taught to believe stood for all that

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was highest and best in this New World to which he was still so much a stranger. . . .

*My country, 'tis of thee,
Sweet land of liberty!*

Then came the Army proper, now in step, now out of it, but presenting a gallant spectacle, for all that. The wooden swords tossed bravely against the dingy background of the tenements. The ragged dresses fluttered like little banners. The bare feet danced to the music of the drum!

Came the Landsturm, consisting of the Foggarty girls, very stiff in their pink gingham, and Susie Costello and Yetta Horowitz and Sadie Goronivinsky, with Baby Goronivinsky flung, wailing, over her shoulder. Came the Queen, hobbling as best she might, and barely able to keep the pace.

Suddenly a woman darted into the street and snatched Baby Goronivinsky from the Landsturm's arms. Her hand fell heavily upon the shoulder of Sadie, and that small pilgrim was lost to the cause. Others fell by the wayside, victims of parental authority, until there were but a scant dozen left in the ranks. But these were valiant spirits and true. . . .

A-rub-a-dub-dub! Tra, la, la, la!

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The procession swung out of the Alley and around the corner of the frowzy saloon. And then a strange thing happened. High above the clamor of the street rose a childish treble, of distinctly foreign accent, singing Bandsman Benny's only tune:

*"Land where our fathers died,
Land of the Pilgrim's pride,"*

Shrill voices took up the song. It reached the sidewalks, pierced the walls of cheap lodging-houses, stole into the little hopeless shops. An old, old man stood upon the curb and cheered weakly, waving a gnarled stick. . . .

*"From every mountainside
Let freedom ring!"*

But only the old man, of all the people who turned to stare, made any acknowledgment of the song. The others looked once, and then away, perceiving that it was merely a child's pretense. And, indeed, who but a child would dare sing of freedom in such a place?

Back across the Unmentionable Avenues marched the King, with his empire at his heels. There was a lump in his throat. His heart beat madly. Already in the distance he could see

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the blur of green that marked the boundary of the Forbidden Kingdoms.

A ragged cheer ran down the line. The Army, too, had caught sight of that distant green. The song soared to a thin crescendo, ended in a joyous shout. The roar of the traffic grew fainter. The street became soberly respectable, as streets do that come into the presence of wealth. Quiet houses lifted on either hand. . . . They marched out into the little Square and saw the Park lying cool and sweet and green in the sunlight. . . .

Brown sparrows fluttered along the clean gravel walks; an ancient Gardener stooped above a bed of flowers; a fountain threw silver mists into the jeweled air. . . . The King put his hand into his pocket and drew forth the Key to the iron gate.

The Army of the faithful few broke ranks and clustered about him. Breathless voices cried out to him. Small fists beat upon the gate. From afar, a very impressive Policeman bore down upon the scene, his brass buttons winking in the strong light. Inside the fence, pale nursemaids snatched up their precious charges and stood like frightened fowls, huddling their broods beneath their skirts. The

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aged Gardener alone seemed to understand. He came limping toward the gate, smiling and nodding and holding out his earth-stained old hands. . . .

And then, just as the King was about to twist the Key in the lock, he remembered his promise to the Queen. She was to be the first in! - He turned and saw her hobbling desperately along the opposite sidewalk, her face flushed and burning, her lips parted.

"Come on, Maggie," called the King.

With a little imploring gesture, she hopped off the curb and came diagonally toward him, her eyes fixed upon his face. . . . Somewhere across the City sounded the belled voice of a great clock, striking the half-hour.

And at that moment, from the mouth of the eminently mentionable avenue that flows into the Square, the King saw approaching an electric motor, of strangely familiar appointments, whose stout driver and slim footman wore a no-less familiar maroon-and-buff livery. It was Aunt Philomena's brougham!

The King shrank back against the gate, bewildered, confused. The sight of the brougham had brought back, with startling suddenness, the whole edifice of his former existence. The

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memory of it stood like a prison tower, threatening his hard-won freedom. . . .

He did not see little Maggie's danger. He only saw the meeting of his two worlds, the one moving in the shape of a rich and shining machine, the other limping in the dust of the high-road, human and vulnerable. . . . He ran forward, with a shout of warning:

"Maggie, look out!"

The lame Queen heard and glanced over her shoulder in alarm. The brougham swerved sharply around the corner, sounding its gong. With a frightened sob little Maggie turned—in the wrong direction. The crutch slipped from her grasp. She stood, white with horror, her arms raised as though to fend off the Juggernaut.

Then, even as the motor slid with shrieking brakes, the King's hands struck her body. She spun half-about, stumbled, and plunged head-long into the arms of the panting Policeman. . . .

The King had a blinding vision of two maroon-and-buff creatures leaning high above him, and after that—darkness, and dying voices, and a great pain.

XVIII

“YOU MUST BEGIN WITH THE CHILDREN”

“**B**ARKER is never late,” said Miss Philomena.

The Bishop drew out a gold watch as plump and round as he.

“Eleven-thirty—ah!”

They stood at the library window, awaiting the arrival of Barker and the brougham, both conscious of the slight constraint that presages a departure. At another window stood the Doctor, apparently entranced by some passing drama of the street. Through the open door of the dining-room the rest of the Conference could be seen refreshing themselves with sandwiches and iced coffee.

Suddenly the Doctor wheeled from his window. “Philomena,” he said, sharply, “look across the street there, by the Park gate—”

Miss Philomena turned in surprise; but at

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that moment caught sight of the brougham rolling smoothly into the Square.

"Here's Barker now!" she exclaimed, with an audible sigh of relief.

"Ah!" said the Bishop. He approached the Doctor, extending his hand in a true spirit of Christian forgiveness.

"Good-by, Doctor MacLean. I—ah—trust that our differences of opinion will not— *Good gracious! Are you ill?*"

"What is it?" cried Miss Philomena, starting forward. "What do you see?"

"Out of my way!" roared the Doctor. "Your car has killed a child!"

He plunged headlong for the door, brushing the plump Bishop out of his path with one sweep of the arm. . . .

The entire household came surging to the window, with shocked faces and a discord of confused, hysterical sentences.

"It was the brougham," whispered Miss Philomena. "A child . . . I think that some one is hurt. Doctor MacLean has gone out—"

"It was a little cripple," said a voice. "I saw her just before it happened."

"No, it was the boy. He ran in front of the car—"

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"That's right. The boy!"

"The wheels struck him—"

"There's the Doctor!"

"He's bringing him in—"

"I think I'm going to faint," wailed Miss Jones, the poetess.

"Courage," gasped the Bishop. It was the first word that he had been able to utter since the Doctor's elbow struck his diaphragm.

They were in the front hall now, gathered about the open door, peering over one another's shoulders. Up the brown-stone steps came the tall Doctor, his grim lips set like granite, the body of a boy in his arms. On the sidewalk behind him a group of ragged children stood with white faces. . . .

"Get away, you fools!"

The eminent ladies and gentlemen in the hallway trod one another's toes in the effort to escape the Doctor's eyes. He strode through them like an avenging angel, holding that limp, small burden against his breast. A light striking through the stained glass over the door fell unexpectedly upon the hurt child's face. Miss Philomena swayed forward with a great cry:

"O God! What have I done?"

At the sudden anguish in her voice the Doc-

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tor paused, as though a knife had touched his heart. Then he turned his head, slowly, and looked deep into the eyes of the woman who had played at being a mother.

And in that moment the King's eyes opened, and his lips said, very faintly:

"You must begin with the children."

XIX

IN WHICH A CHILD CRIES UPON THE STEPS, AND THE BISHOP TAKES A CAB

IT was very still in the library; so still that the Bishop could hear the ticking of the watch in his pocket. The whole house, indeed, seemed hushed and waiting, like a house that holds its breath.

In a little room above-stairs, a room where only yesterday toy soldiers had stood along the wall, a stern-faced Doctor and a phlegmatic nurse were fighting a battle with Death—fighting desperately and against heavy odds. An hour ago word had come down from the Play-room that the fight was hopeless, the day lost.

The Bishop sat by the window, mechanically turning the leaves of a morocco-bound volume that he had discovered upon the shelves. The title of the book was *Trippit on Exodus*.

But his face did not wear the expression com-

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mon to authors engaged in the perusal of their own works. It wore, instead, the look of an important man who has found himself suddenly to be of no importance, and who incidentally has missed his train.

He took out his plump timepiece, removed it from its gold chain, and thrust it deep into his trousers pocket. The inexorable ticking no longer played upon his nerves, but there was another matter of which he could not rid them. All through the long afternoon, at irregular intervals, footsteps had sounded in the stillness above him; footsteps that fell ominously upon the waiting quiet of that house.

A vision of Miss Philomena's face rose before the Bishop's eyes. He shut the book with a gesture of impotent resentment. Why, in her hour of trouble, had she not come to him? Why must she remain in the hall outside the Play-room door, her hands locked across her breast, her head inclined to catch every whisper of that grim battle in which she could take no part? The Bishop raised his plump hands, and let them fall heavily upon his knees. As a comforter, especially of feminine distress, he knew himself to be an adept. Why, then—?

He looked up with a start. Miss Philomena

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stood in the doorway, her arms held stiffly at her side, her face expressionless and cold.

"He is a little better," she said, without emotion. "He may not— They will know in an hour."

The Bishop sprang up and took her hand in his, leading her gently to a chair. Then he sat down beside her.

"Tell me all," said the Bishop, with sympathetic sadness; but Miss Philomena made a gesture.

"There is nothing to tell. I thought he was at the Holland House with his governess. Either he ran away or she abandoned him. I should not have done what I did. He was only . . . a baby."

"You must not reproach yourself," said the Bishop in the voice of the comforter.

"Why not? The fault is mine. If he dies now it will be God's punishment—" She leaned forward in her chair, her whole body tense, her eyes feverishly alight. "Don't you see? In front of my own door—my own car! God's punishment!"

The Bishop drew back, startled. It was for his comfort that the car had been ordered. But at the look on his face Miss Philomena regained

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her composure. She became the considerate hostess whose first concern is for the welfare of her guests.

"Barker is prostrated," she said, quietly. "I have telephoned a man from the garage to drive you to the station."

"My dear lady, I beg of you—"

"The brougham will be here at five-thirty."

The Bishop bowed his head. Plainly, Providence had decreed that he should ride to his train in the electric brougham.

A dry cough caused them to turn. Simms stood between the portières, a pained embarrassment upon his wooden features.

"Beg pardon, ma'am. There's a child on the steps, ma'am."

"A what, Simms?"

"A child, ma'am."

"What is it doing there?"

"Crying, ma'am."

"Crying!"

"Yes, ma'am. I'm at a loss, ma'am."

"Bring the child to me," said Miss Philomena in a low, strained voice.

"Very good, ma'am."

The butler disappeared into the hall. The Bishop rose and walked nervously to the

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shelves, where he proceeded to stare fiercely at the backs of a set of Thackeray. First he had missed his train and now he was to be spoiled of his rôle of comforter.

Miss Philomena sat with her hands upon the arms of her chair, bending forward slightly, her glance fixed upon the curtained doorway. Presently she heard Simms's voice; then the butler reappeared, holding back the heavy curtains.

"I forgot to say—a female child, ma'am."

Miss Philomena saw the flutter of a ragged skirt. Then into the room hopped a little lame girl, with great, tragic blue eyes and tear-stained cheeks. She came straight toward the pale woman in the chair, unawed by the strangeness of her surroundings, unconscious of their magnificence. A pace away she stopped and leaned, quivering, upon her crutch. Then drawing a great breath, she said:

"Is he goin' to die?"

"I don't know," replied Miss Philomena in a voice strangely humble. Then taking the child's thin face between her hands, she asked: "What were you crying for, out there on the steps?"

"For him," said the child.

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"What is your name?" continued Miss Philomena, very gently.

"Maggie."

"And where do you come from?"

"From O'Connor's Alley. *He* brought us. He said we could play in the Park, and all. He—"

"Where did you meet him?"

"He came."

"Came to O'Connor's Alley?"

"Yes, ma'am."

"Was there any one with him—a lady—?"

"No, ma'am. He was all alone. He had a fight with Mickey Flynn."

"Who is Mickey Flynn?"

"A boy."

"He struck this boy?"

"Yes ma'am. In the belly."

The Bishop, with a faintly horrified expression, concentrated his faculties upon Thackeray, who was a gentleman. But Miss Philomena only drew the child closer, until the patched skirt brushed the rose silk.

"What happened then?"

"Then he stood treat for every one to ride on the Merry-go-round. He had a bag of pennies—"

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"Ah!"

"And we had ice-cream cones, two for a nickel, and he bought the Red-Plush Crutch—"

She held up the treasure for Miss Philomena's inspection. But suddenly the light of that glorious reminiscence faded from her eyes. She grasped Miss Philomena's arm with convulsive fingers.

"Is he goin' to die?"

"No, no," said Miss Philomena, almost roughly. Then her voice took on its former gentleness.

"What was it about the Park?"

"He said it was his. He had the Key, and all. He was goin' to have it a kingdom, like's in the Fairy-tales. He was the King, he said. And he said I could be—he said I could be—"

She paused, staring at Miss Philomena in dumb misery, all her tumbled castles in her eyes. This was to have been her day of days!

"What did he say that you could be?"

"He said—that I could be—the Queen."

Miss Philomena stooped swiftly and caught the slight figure in her arms. "And so you shall be yet," she cried, thinking only to drive that terrible starved look from the child's eyes. But little Maggie shook her head, hopelessly.

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"I spoiled it all," she whispered. "He was at the gate, and he called me. Then I started acrost the street—and it came—and he ran in front of it. . . ."

The Red-Plush Crutch tumbled suddenly to the floor. Little Maggie's face was hidden in the lace at Miss Philomena's bosom, her hands clung to the rose silk.

"I was goin' to be the Queen," she sobbed. "The Queen!"

A footstep sounded on the stairs beyond the door. Miss Philomena, her arms still about the child, lifted her head quickly. The Bishop turned from the shelves.

The Doctor entered the room. On his face, so like a gray rock, were traces of storm, of strife. He seemed as old as the stone that stands against the sea, and as tempest-worn, yet there was about him an indescribable air of triumph, of victory.

Miss Philomena's lips moved. "Well?"

"There is a slight hope."

"Thank God!"

At the unorthodox nakedness of that trembling whisper the Bishop turned back to his shelves, a bit uncomfortable, a trifle shocked. He did not approve of religion with its clothes off.

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The Doctor came forward slowly and laid his hand upon Maggie's shoulder. "Aren't you the little girl I saw—out there?"

"Yes, sir," said the child. Then, lifting her tragic eyes to his, she asked, breathlessly, "Is he goin' to get well?"

"We'll see," replied the Doctor. "We'll see." To Miss Philomena he said: "I must go now. The nurse will know where to find me if anything turns up. Where does this young lady live?"

"In O'Connor's Alley," replied Miss Philomena, and for some reason she patted the frail hand still clinging to the fold of her dress.

The Doctor bent down and peered into little Maggie's face. "Will you let me take you home?"

"Yes, sir."

"I'll send you both in the brougham!" said Miss Philomena, rising.

"No need. I've already telephoned for a cab." He strode to the window and looked out.

"Yes, it's here."

"So is the brougham!"

At this, the Bishop spun about and confronted them, his plump face a composite picture of outraged importance, neglected virtue, and pure physical discomfort.

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"My train!" blurted the Bishop, and immediately would have given all that he possessed to have recalled these words. Miss Philomena stared at him with a curious, diagnosing glance, as though she had never seen him before. Her eyes met his and she smiled faintly.

"I am sure," said Miss Philomena, "that the Bishop will not mind taking the cab."

XX

MAGGIE RIDES HOME IN STATE, AND MRS. O'CONNOR SEES THROUGH THE DOCTOR'S DISGUISE

VERY stiff and straight upon the maroon-colored cushions sat little Maggie, the crutch against her knees. Smoothly, swiftly sped the brougham, giving exaltation to the body and wings to the soul. It was like riding the winds of Heaven upon a cloud! It was as unearthly as the flight of a butterfly, as restful as Sleep!

Was this the Juggernaut of a few hours ago? Surely not! For now its wheels seemed shod with air. Its whirring mechanisms were vague cobwebs, spinning through space. Its crushing weight had turned to thistle-down. It floated, dartled, hung poised like a soaring swallow, spurned the earth!

And yet little Maggie could not free herself

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from the horror of that moment before the Park gates. Inevitably her mind returned to it from the clouds, and each time she glanced up at the tall Doctor with the same whispered question:

“Is he goin’ to get well?”

And always the Doctor answered, in his deep, gruff voice: “We’ll see! We’ll see!”

At last, when a little of the wonder had gone from the child’s eyes, they fell to talking in friendly fashion. The Doctor wanted to know many things, so that it was not long before Maggie’s monosyllabic replies began to lengthen into eager narrative. She told the story of the King’s adventure from beginning to end, and the Doctor listened gravely, his massive head bent to catch the swift-falling sentences. Particularly Maggie dwelt upon the purchase of the Red-Plush Crutch; told how she had wanted it for Christmas, and how it had taken the King’s last penny to buy.

“It’s real pretty, for a crutch,” she said, shyly, holding it up for him to admire. They were well into the slums by this time and the Doctor’s face seemed to have caught something of the gray sorrow of the beggar city. He turned the crutch in his great hands, studying it

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as he might have studied some physical deformity.

"Fine! Fine! I suppose you're quite happy hopping about on this?"

"Yes, sir."

"Hm-m! How was it that you hurt your leg?"

"I didn't hurt it. It just came, when I was little."

"Just came, did it?" The Doctor glanced through the window at the drab tenements huddled sordidly against the sky. The gray sorrow of his face deepened.

Then the brougham veered suddenly about a corner. The Doctor caught sight of a wretched saloon, with a broken sign hanging from its wall. The sign bore upon its face the words, "O'Connor's Alley."

"Here we are," he said, starting up. "Know any of those children on the sidewalk there?"

"Yes, sir. Oh, there's Mickey Flynn, and Benny, and Sadie—"

Little Maggie, her eyes sparkling with pride, leaned far out of the window and waved her hand, frantically. "Yoo-hoo, Mickey! Yoo-hoo, Sadie!"

The group upon the sidewalk gazed, open-

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mouthed, at their erstwhile Queen. It was Maggie, and no mistake! With a chorus of deafening shrieks O'Connor's Alley raced after the slow-moving machine, thumped its fat sides at eminent danger to life and limb, swarmed about it in shoals as it drew up to the curb.

Then—wonder of wonders!—the door opened and out stepped a tall man who, with a gesture worthy of a cinematograph hero, turned and handed down from the stately vehicle—Maggie O'Connor!

The Alley lifted its voice in praise. The noise was something in the nature of a record even for that street of superlative noises.

And so little Maggie rode home in state, as a Queen should do, and if there be any scoffer who doubts her triumph, I shall lead a hundred witnesses to his door-step within the hour, any one of whom will swear that never in all the history of the Alley was there such a home-coming as this!

* * * * *

"I promise you nothing. But if you will bring her to the hospital to-morrow—say at eleven—I will make an examination. Then we can decide whether a treatment is possible."

"God be good to ye, Doctor. If ye'll only

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cure little Maggie of her lameness I'll work my fingers to the bone—"

"Stuff and nonsense, Mrs. O'Connor!" Growling and grumbling to forestall further expressions of gratitude, the Doctor rose from the kitchen chair and said, brusquely: "To-morrow at eleven. Show that card I gave you to the man at the door."

"The holy angels bless—"

"Stuff and nonsense!"

Mrs. O'Connor wiped her eyes on the corner of her apron and smiled tremulously at the tall Doctor. Woman-like, she had seen through his thin disguise of gruffness.

"'Tis a kind man ye are," she said.

The Doctor snorted and strode to the window overlooking the historic back yard. In the clear space between the rubbish-piles little Maggie sat recounting her adventures to a rapt audience. The Doctor stood for a moment, looking down. Then he said, abruptly:

"If you must bless somebody, bless the boy who saved little Maggie's life."

"Is he hurt bad, Doctor?"

"He is," said the Doctor, grimly.

Again Mrs. O'Connor had recourse to the corner of her apron. "And only yesterday,"

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she faltered, "he was sittin' here at the table like one of my own. 'Tis strange how things happen—" She broke off, twisting her red hands in her apron, a puzzled light in her tired eyes. "'Tis strange how one person's hurt is another person's happiness. 'Twas the little lad sent you to the Alley, in a way."

The Doctor did not look at her. He was staring down into the yard. "I will do what I can," he said, at last.

"Heaven bless you," whispered the woman, "for bein' so good to us."

At that the Doctor turned. "It's high time," he roared, "that some one was good to you!"

And, jamming his hat on his head, he went down the malodorous stairs to the street.

XXI

THE KING RECEIVES A LETTER FROM A LADY, AND MISS PHILOMENA DECIDES

THE King dwelt in the Sick-Abed Country, between snowy pillow mountains and the lowland of a Checkered Quilt. A turban of bandages crowned his hair; one arm was strapped to his side. He seemed very still and small. . . . Near at hand, a Blue-and-White Nurse sat writing temperatures upon a chart. The Christmas soldiers, former dictators of the Play-room, lay unceremoniously tumbled into a corner. The noble Arab stood with a bedquilt flung over his head, a melancholy shape. Faint odors of iodoform permeated the air.

But they had moved the bed to the window, and over the mountain-tops of his pillows the King could see the plumed trees bowing in the wind. Occasionally when the breeze shifted the sweet earth-smells came up to him, and the gossip of birds, so that no matter how cruel the

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pain, he could never forget the kingdom that was his. Day after day, as he climbed the pillows from the valley of Must-Lie-Flat to the heights of Can-Sit-Up, more and more of his kingdom came into view across the window-ledge, until finally he had it all back again—flowers and fountain and sun-splashed lawn. It had been a steep, hard climb, and once or twice he had wanted—oh, so much!—to slip back into the valley where a great Sleep waited; but always he saw the tree-tops nodding, and it seemed to him that he must go on, avoiding Sleep, because he alone possessed the Key to the Park, and if he slipped back the great adventure would never be finished and the Other Children would look with wistful faces through the iron gates until the end of the world. . . .

He was on his fourth pillow now, which, as every sick person knows, is the next best thing to Sitting Up. To-morrow (or the day after) he would be well enough to go back and gather up the loose ends of his shattered enterprise.

The Play-room door opened softly and into the room, for the first time since he had lain among the pillows, came the Queen Regent, a letter in her hand. The Blue-and-White Nurse

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rose, nodded, and slipped away. Miss Philomena was alone with her Lesser Charity.

The Doctor had warned her that he would be very pale against his mountains, but she was not prepared to find him so *small*. A few feet from the bed she stopped abruptly and looked down at him with stricken eyes. Her breath caught in her throat. Her heart seemed stifled with tears.

"Oh!" whispered Miss Philomena.

The King turned his head. Their glances met. For a moment the woman who had played at being a mother stood motionless, facing the high court of the child's blue gaze. Then, somehow, she was on her knees beside him, her arm beneath his shoulders, her cheek against his.

"My baby . . . my baby!"

The King lay very still, afraid almost to breathe lest he should undo this miracle. He was filled with a strange and beautiful happiness. He felt that the barriers between them, the great wall of misunderstanding, had been suddenly and mysteriously whisked away . . . and so he did not move, did not speak, only nestled there in the hollow of her arm.

"Is there anything—you would like?"

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"I like . . . this."

"They would not let me come before. . . . But I shall come often now. . . . I am going to take care of you—always!"

His free arm stole up and fastened about her neck.

"Why did you run away?"

"There was no one—to play with."

"And were you very lonely?"

The yellow head upon her shoulder moved slightly in assent. Miss Philomena's arm tightened about him.

"How did you ever find those other children?"

"I used to see them—peekin' through the fence—and I went—and found them."

"And then—?"

"Then Mickey Flynn got up the Army, and we came to the Park—and everything."

Involuntarily Miss Philomena glanced through the open window at the King's country, lying green in the sun. A picture of that ragged pilgrimage composed itself in her mind; she saw the adventurers marching with the King at their head. And then, by some whimsical trick of the imagination, another picture rose before her eyes—a picture of the fat Bishop in the robe of Moses leading his hypothetical

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thousands into a theoretical paradise, holding up his robes as he walked, and reading sonorous passages from a *de luxe* edition of *Trippit on Exodus*. And she saw quite clearly which of these two pictures was true and good; which hypocritical and false. . . .

"You were going to have a kingdom there, weren't you?"

"Yes," said the King, looking up quickly.

"I know. Little Maggie told me. She told me many things, and she showed me the crutch that you had bought for her. I was very proud."

"I didn't *touch* the blue Pig," said the King, shyly. "It—fell."

"If I had only understood!"

Then, with a little laugh, she rose and held out to him an envelope upon which was written, in scrawling characters, the King's name.

"A letter for you! I had forgotten all about it."

"Who's it from?"

"I'm sure I could never guess. Shall I open it?"

"Yes."

Miss Philomena sat down upon the edge of the bed and broke the seal of the mysterious

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envelope. Within was a letter which I shall set forth, with a historian's privilege, in full. The letter ran as follows:

Deer Friend, I am fine how are you. Are you wel yet. I am in the hospittle. It is grand. Ther is nobody in the room but me and it is swel with flours in a vace and I had ice cream 3 times since I came. Wat do you have. I am not sick but they is sumthing on my leg to make it wel. I had an operashun, it was fine. It didnt hurt. The doctor comes to see me evry day and its him thats makeing me wel. He told me about you and I cent my luv to you. I will klose now and oblige

MAGGIE O'CONNOR.

p. s. I rote this bye myself.

"What a beautiful letter!" cried Miss Philomena, whose eyes were strangely glistening.

For some time the King did not speak. Then he said, "Won't Maggie be lame any more?"

"The Doctor isn't sure yet," replied Miss Philomena, gently, "but he hopes that she will be better. And now, suppose we answer Maggie's letter. I'll get pen and ink, and you can think up things to say."

So the King lay back in his snowy mountains and thought up things to say. There were so many, many things now, and such happy things! But, curiously enough, when the paper was brought he found that he could not say them, after all.

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Miss Philomena sat with the writing-pad propped against her knees, the pen poised.

"We'll begin 'Dear Maggie'—there! Now what?"

" 'How are you,' " suggested the King.

" 'How—are—you?' " repeated the secretary, putting it down.

" 'How is your leg?' "

" 'How—is—your—leg?' ")

" 'Is it well yet?' "

" 'Is—it—well—yet?' "

Silence. The King moved restlessly upon his pillows. It was no simple matter writing to a lady. Finally he looked at his collaborator.

"You think up something," said the King.

Miss Philomena nibbled her pen, which is always productive of inspiration.

"Suppose we say, 'I am going to give a party'! Would you like that?"

The King nodded eagerly. "Can I invite Mickey, and Benny, and Heinie Schmidt, and all the O'Connors?"

"Every one of them!"

"Can I invite the Bad Woman, too?"

Miss Philomena put down her writing-pad.

"Who is—the Bad Woman?"

Very simply the King told her. He described

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the Drunken Man and the Laugh with Hands. He told how he had run against the Bad Woman's skirt in the dark; how she had taken him home, and given him ice-cream for supper, and pancakes with syrup the next morning.

"She isn't bad, really," concluded the King. "That's just her name."

"Oh!" said Miss Philomena. This was a part of the King's escapade which she had not unraveled—the only part, indeed. Much she had learned from the Doctor and little Maggie; still more by a chance investigation of her jewel-box and linen-chest. From the first she had missed a small diamond pin; from the second a lace centerpiece. Also, she seemed to be short of flat silver. Subsequent inquiry had brought forth the fact that Simms had seen Thelma, the governess, leave the house by the back entrance on the very morning of the King's escape. Simms had thought nothing of it at the time—Simms was English and not particularly given to thought—but upon careful reconsideration he decided that Thelma "'ad acted very queer." So Miss Philomena, putting two and two together, had arrived at the inevitable four which in this case equaled an extremely reprehensible governess. Thus the chief mystery

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of the King's adventure had been explained—but here, suddenly, was a new complication, in the form of a Bad Woman who was not bad, really.

A month ago Miss Philomena would have turned in horror from the very thought of extending hospitality to such a Person (except in a purely charitable way); but now she faced that thought with a strange, new humility; a humility dating from that unforgettable moment in the hall when the Doctor had paused, with the King in his arms, to look into her eyes. Fortunately for progress, it does not take days and years to produce the revolutions of the human soul. Such changes may be wrought in the white heat of a single second. So Miss Philomena had changed, almost unconsciously, and under the guidance of the Doctor's look had begun to grope her way into the true world of sympathy and understanding.

"If she was kind to you," said Miss Philomena, "she shall come to the party."

So it was decided that the King's levee should include a Bad Woman, and the construction of Maggie's letter was concluded, with many references to the impending festivities and the closing assurance that there would be chocolate ice-cream in bulk.

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"That's a splendid letter," said Miss Philomena, folding the completed missive. "It ought to make little Maggie jump out of bed and dance a jig!"

A gruff chuckle sounded behind them.

"What's this talk about jigs?"

They looked up and saw the tall Doctor standing on the threshold of the room, his hands in his trousers pockets, his shaggy brows contracted in a ferocious frown.

"Come," said he, advancing to the bed, "out with it. What have you two been plotting together?"

The King laughed in appreciation of the Doctor's droll face; but Miss Philomena fled to the door, where she turned and glanced defiantly at the Doctor.

"We have been plotting paradises," said Miss Philomena, and flung a kiss to the King with either hand.

An hour later, when the Doctor descended from the Play-room, he found her seated at her desk in the library, thoughtfully turning the pages of a small note-book.

"The boy is doing very nicely," said the Doctor—"very nicely. I shall have him up-by Thanksgiving, at least."

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"Thanksgiving!"

"Exactly. You don't seem to realize that it's almost a miracle—having him up at all."

Miss Philomena was trembling as she faced him. "I realize—more than you think. I realize that you have given him life, and that you have given me—something even dearer!"

"Nonsense!" said the Doctor, but his voice had lost its harsh note.

Miss Philomena smiled. "I am not afraid of you any more. I know now that you are not"—her voice sank to a whisper—"a pagan."

"What am I, then?"

"You are only a practising Christian."

"Humph!" said the Doctor, and rubbed his nose violently.

She came close to him, the note-book in her hand. "That day—in the hall—when you looked at me," she faltered. "I shall never forget—"

"I've been sorry about that," said the Doctor, abruptly.

"You needn't be. It was an extremely medicinal look, a trifle hard to take, but very beneficial in its results. I think I know how Saul felt when the lightning blinded him."

"Philomena!"

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She held the note-book out to him, smiling a little. "Do you recognize this?"

The Doctor bent to scan the pages; then straightened up again. "Bless me, I'd forgotten. The Resolution!"

"I was to decide between this and—the other—within a month. The month is up to-day."

"It is not a great matter, as the world goes," said the Doctor, gruffly.

"No, it is not a great matter, though I believe I once thought that civilization could not do without our Resolutions. But it is still very important to me, because it means that I must decide, not between two theories of life, but between two lives—two men." Her face was flushed, but she went on bravely. "I have made my decision."

"Well?"

She put her hands to her cheeks; dropped them again with a sudden passionate gesture.

"Oh," she whispered, "if you had suggested that we draw down the stars, I would have decided for that—because it was you—"

"I have always known that you would love me some day," said the Doctor.

XXII

MR. O'CONNOR IS STAKED TO HIS HABILIMENTS.—
HOW POLITICAL ECONOMY MAY INCLUDE
GRAY TROUSERS WITH A STRIPE

MR. TERRENCE O'CONNOR, Democratic nominee for Alderman, stood in painful meditation upon the sidewalk just outside the congenial saloon. In a moment, he knew, he would enter that harbor of content. The prospect loomed pleasantly before him. Mr. O'Connor was an essential, an instinctive club-man.

But for the present his thoughts were occupied by another matter, a nagging, troublesome affair such as the wives of the world invariably conceive to disturb the masculine peace of mind. To come to the gist of it, Mrs. O'Connor had suggested that Mr. O'Connor betake himself to Gramercy Park, there to thank Miss Philomena Van Zandt for returning little Maggie in the automobile; and also to inquire for the King.

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This Mr. O'Connor would have been charmed to do but for two unfortunate circumstances. The first was a natural repugnance toward walking the several blocks to the Square. The second was that he possessed no trousers suitable for the adventure. His frock-coat would do well enough, to be sure; but in these ceremonious days one cannot go calling upon a lady clad only in a frock-coat. . . .

He sighed, as though surrendering himself to the entanglements of fate, and opened the rear door of the saloon. Thrusting in his head, Mr. O'Connor observed Mr. Fogarty sitting at a small table, with a newspaper spread out before him and a glass of beer at his elbow.

"Drink up!" said Mr. Fogarty, catching sight of his candidate. Mr. O'Connor shook his head gloomily, walked to the table, sat down, and ordered beer. Then, having refreshed himself at the wellsprings of conviviality, he informed Mr. Fogarty of Mrs. O'Connor's disturbing suggestion.

"Women ain't consistent," he concluded, sadly. "How can I go callin' on the Four Hundred without the proper habiliments, Dan?"

"What might habiliments be?" asked Mr. Fogarty.

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"Pants," said Mr. O'Connor, bluntly.

Mr. Fogarty glanced at the Statesman's nether garments, at the Statesman's melancholy countenance, and finally at the newspaper before him. There was a speculative gleam in his owl-like eyes.

"Terrence," said the District Leader, "I will stake you to the habiliments. Read that!"

Mr. O'Connor picked up the paper, started, gave vent to an exclamation, and then began to read, one large, red forefinger tracing the lines:

BRING COUNTRY TO CITY, SAYS CHARITY CONFERENCE

MISS VAN ZANDT TO LEAD FIGHT FOR IM-
PROVED LIVING CONDITIONS IN
LOWER EAST SIDE

Miss Philomena Van Zandt, President of the United Charities, to-day gave out for publication the annual Resolution of the organization. The Resolution pledges its framers to the Utopian project of "bringing the country to the city." At the same time Miss Van Zandt issued a statement to the press, in which she outlined several practical suggestions for the accomplishment of this ambitious program.

"Our purpose," said Miss Van Zandt, "is to launch a campaign for the reclamation of the slums. Reformers in the past have sought for means to do without the city. We want to see what we can do with it.

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"The East Side of New York presents a problem typical of the modern democracy. It is the result of an economic slavery, of freedom turned to license, which is beyond the reach of ordinary charitable resources. Nevertheless, we are convinced that with the proper support from the public and the politicians, much can be done to improve its shameful deformities.

"We have made a banner of a phrase. Beneath it must march a troop of practical suggestions if our idea is to do more than appear upon parade. To bring the country to the city is impossible in any literal sense; but we believe that the spirit of the former may be transplanted as flowers are transplanted from their native meadows to the formal gardens of the town.

"True reform must begin with the children. We advocate a system of scientifically apportioned playgrounds, the utilization of the public schools as recreation centers, the further forbidding of wheeled traffic upon designated streets, and the establishment of small local parks wherever possible.

"We also advocate the elimination of the prison-cell tenement. Light and air should be a matter of common right, not of special privilege. The gifts of heaven were never intended to be purchasable. Finally, we wish to point out that the roofs of the tenements compose a great plateau whose potentialities as yet have been but slightly explored. If we cannot have fields and flowers at our feet, is it too much to hope that some day we may have them over our heads? Is it wholly fanciful to dream of a vast garden upon the roofs of the city? We think not—"

Mr. O'Connor lowered the paper and gazed with sudden understanding at Mr. Fogarty.

"'Tis me platform!" said Mr. O'Connor.

Mr. Fogarty nodded, with the pleased air of

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one whose strategies have begun to unfold. Circumstances had reconciled him to the strange spectacle of an Alderman with a platform.

"Next to a good, fat campaign fund," said Mr. Fogarty, "what's the best thing a candidate can have, Terrence?"

"Backin'," said Mr. O'Connor, promptly.

Mr. Fogarty brought his fist down upon the table. "Backin's what you'll have, and it'll be A-Number-One backin', too. Did y' see what the paper said, Terrence? 'With the support of the public *and the politicians!* That's us, Terrence. That's where we come in. You go call on this here Miss Philippine. Tell her that you're crazy about roof-gardens. Tell her you'll fight for more playgrounds. She will come out for Terrence O'Connor for Alderman. Your pi'ture will be in all the papers. The reporters will be after you thick as flies! You'll be elected fair and honest—and cheap!"

Mr. O'Connor regarded this Napoleon of politics in silent admiration.

"Economy," added Mr. Fogarty, "is the best policy. Why should I spend good money to elect an Alderman when I can get him elected for the price of a pair of habiliments?"

"You got brains, Dan!" cried Mr. O'Connor.

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"I need 'em," said Mr. Fogarty. "Drink up!"

Mr. O'Connor did so. Politics, in this land of high and dry ideals, is an arid business.

"We'll have some cards printed," announced Mr. Fogarty, with waxing enthusiasm, "and charge it to campaign expenses. I know a jobber that does first-class work at a dollar a hundred."

"Do ye know what color pants goes with a frock-coat, Dan?" asked Mr. O'Connor, anxiously.

"I got a book that tells," replied Mr. Fogarty. He rose and went to the bar. From beneath a pile of cigar-boxes he drew a gaudy pamphlet whose cover was dedicated to the virtues of a certain Old Corn Whisky. Upon turning this cover, however, one discovered that the pamphlet was in reality a

SOCIAL GUIDE and GENTS' ETIQUETTE

"I knew this would come in handy some day," said Mr. Fogarty, turning the pages, "though the whisky is rotten bad. Here we are: 'Afternoon wear for Gents.'" He read aloud, "The frock-coat is considered refined for after-

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noon wear in the upper circles of society.' ”

Mr. Fogarty paused and glanced at Mr. O'Connor. “That’s us,” said Mr. Fogarty.

“I knew as much meself,” replied Mr. O'Connor. “Get on to the pants.”

Mr. Fogarty read further, “ ‘Pants should be worn—’ ”

“ ‘Tis customary!’ ”

“ ‘—should be worn light or dark, accordin’ to whether the function is a reception or a funeral. Gray with a black stripe is the genteel thing for teas, party calls, etc.’ ”

“Gray with a black stripe it is! I will rent a pair from Boris Maxman. What does it say about hats, Dan?”

Mr. Fogarty turned a page. “ ‘Haberdashery — Hair-cuts — Handkerchiefs — *Hats*. The high silk hat is worn with the frock-coat—’ ”

“I will look like a Dook,” said Mr. O'Connor.

“ ‘Shoes,’ ” continued Mr. Fogarty, “ ‘should be black with gray or tan tops.’ ”

Mr. O'Connor thrust out a huge foot and surveyed its incasing leather with a speculative eye. Mr. Fogarty closed the pamphlet and pushed back his chair.

“Come on,” said he. “We will go round up the war-paint.”

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With a sigh for his still unemptied glass Mr. O'Connor rose and followed his political ally into the street.

Boris Maxman's pawnshop was the first place visited. Here, after some close bargaining, Mr. O'Connor was outfitted with a pair of gray nether garments and a high silk hat. The price agreed upon was \$1.25, which, as Mr. Fogarty aptly observed, was cheaper than most campaign expenses. Then they sought out the jobber whose printing was first class at a dollar a hundred. The jobber rejoiced in the name of I. Lechtski, and was known vulgarly throughout the district as Ish Ka Bibble. He took Mr. O'Connor's order with an air of sadness natural to one whose name is never pronounced correctly.

"Please to write what you want on the card," said I. Lechtski, presenting Mr. O'Connor with pen, ink, and a blank bit of pasteboard. Mr. O'Connor spread his elbows, flourished the pen, and wrote in a bold hand:

"Terrence O'Connor, Esq."

"Any charge for the address?" asked Mr. Fogarty.

"No, sir," said the jobber.

"Put it down," said Mr. Fogarty.

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Mr. O'Connor wrote in the lower right-hand corner:

"O'Connor's Alley, New York, N. Y."

"Now your politics," said Mr. Fogarty.

"What for?" demanded Mr. O'Connor.

"Advertising," said Mr. Fogarty.

"It ain't etiquette," objected Mr. O'Connor.

"Maybe not," said Mr. Fogarty, "but it's mighty good business."

He took the pen from Mr. O'Connor's modest fingers and added:

"Democratic Candidate for Alderman."

"It don't look so bad," said Mr. O'Connor, studying the card.

"We ought to have some sort of a motto on it," mused Mr. Fogarty, "like 'Vote for O'Connor,' or—"

"'In God we Trust,' " suggested Mr. O'Connor.

"Fine!" said Mr. Fogarty.

The Statesman's card as finally delivered into the hands of I. Lechtski was as follows:

DEMOCRATIC CANDIDATE FOR ALDERMAN

TERRENCE O'CONNOR, Esq.,

"In God We Trust"

O'Connor's Alley,
New York, N. Y.

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Then Mr. Fogarty, reflecting upon the glory that was Mr. O'Connor's, felt himself irresistibly moved to an extravagance even more dignified than calling-cards, or gray trousers with a stripe. As they reached the door of the saloon he paused and gazed appraisingly at Mr. O'Connor. A prophetic picture of his candidate, gray-trouserred, frock-coated, silk-hatted, rose in his mind and overcame his instinctive weakness for political economy.

"Terrence," said Mr. Fogarty, "you can't go on foot. For the honor of the District and the glory of the Democratic party, I am goin' down to Devery's *and hire a hack!*"

XXIII

IN WHICH MR. O'CONNOR ENTERS SOCIETY.—EMBARRASSING ENCOUNTER WITH A WOODEN BUTLER.—HAPPY TERMINATION OF THE CALL

DEVERY'S Livery Stable was noted for the refinement, the excellence of its equipages. The happy bride, in veil and ribbons, felt her marital voyage to be safer if begun in one of Devery's barouches. The bereaved mourner, traveling with drawn curtains to the tomb, experienced a certain assuagement of grief in the thought that Devery was conducting the departed. In joy or sorrow, Devery was the man.

But never, in all the history of Devery's, had there been such a vehicular triumph as that which wafted Mr. O'Connor into the upper circles of society. Mr. Fogarty had ordered the best, and Devery's best was of a superlative quality. Moreover, Devery was a Democrat.

At four precisely of the following afternoon,

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there drew up before the Van Zandt residence in Gramercy Park North, an open coach such as might have borne a King to his coronation. Attached to the coach were two coal-black steeds, decorated with red ribbons, whose shining coats more than atoned for the slight boniness of their bodies, the obvious profusion of their ribs.

Upon the rear seat of the carriage, one arm flung nonchalantly across the back of it, reclined a huge gentleman in frock-coat and silk hat, whose carelessly crossed legs displayed gray trousers with a stripe, whose face wore an expression of heroic ease. As the equipage drew up to the curb with a loud "Whoa, there!" from the driver, which seemed to be superfluous, the huge gentleman got up, smoothed the skirts of his coat, and stood, a statue of refinement, while the driver climbed down and, according to previous rehearsal, opened the door for his distinguished passenger.

"Drive up and down in front of the house," said Mr. O'Connor, *sotto voce*, "so they can see what I came in."

The driver, a sour individual and a Republican, smiled cynically at the vanity of this command. But he did not disobey it. He was a

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driver for Devery's even before he was a Republican.

Mr. O'Connor mounted the brown-stone steps with a sense of having attained, by that brief ascent, the upper circles of society. Boldly he rang the bell. Then ensued that period of waiting which leads even the most practised caller to recite his greetings, to adjust his tie, to plan his bows, to mobilize his manners, to fumble nervously for his cards.

"Cards!" muttered Mr. O'Connor, grasping his trousers pocket. "Don't forget. Cards to every one. Don't forget. Cards!" Then, with a long-drawn sigh, he added, "Saints in glory!" Which did not seem to bear upon the situation.

At last, just as he was beginning to face that dreadful question as to whether he should, or should not, ring the bell a second time, footsteps sounded beyond the portal. Mr. O'Connor broke into a gentle perspiration. The door swung open.

Upon the threshold of the upper circles, staring coldly at Mr. O'Connor, stood an ancient man who might have been carved out of wood, so expressionless were his features, so lifeless his limbs. But more chilling than this

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inhuman woodenness, more chilling, indeed, than anything the mind could imagine, was the appalling novelty of the man's apparel. He was wearing a full-dress suit!

An awful fear smote Mr. O'Connor. Had the *Social Guide* been wrong about afternoon wear for gents? Had he been misled by a lying, cheating, infamously deceitful whisky advertisement? His gray trousers with a stripe—were they malaprop, unrefined? His frock-coat—was it out of fashion? In short, was his glory a false bloom?

"'Ave you any business 'ere?" asked the wooden one, suddenly opening its disdainful mouth.

Mr. O'Connor considered the question. He *had* had business there, until a moment ago, but had he business there now? Would it not be wiser to retreat at once? Having been betrayed by a whisky advertisement, was he to blame if the venture collapsed? But even as he vacillated, the image of Mr. Fogarty's face floated before the harassed gentleman's eyes. Behind him, too, he felt the whole weight of the Democratic party. He would go forward with his call at all costs, apologizing as best he might for the mistake in raiment.

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"I wish to see the lady of the house," said Mr. O'Connor, courageously.

"Ave you a card?"

Mr. O'Connor's heart leapt in his bosom. In this respect, at least, he felt himself to be fortified against the caprices of etiquette.

"I have a whole raft of them," said Mr. O'Connor. In proof of this statement he put his hand in his pocket—his, at least, for the afternoon—and produced a prodigal package of cards. I. Lechtski had done his work well. The cards were beautiful evidences of the printer's art.

"Here," said Mr. O'Connor, "take a couple for yerself, and give the rest to yer friends."

Simms fell back in dismay, his cupped hands dribbling pasteboards. "'Oo did you want to see?" he gasped.

"The lady of the house."

"Ave you an appointment?"

Mr. O'Connor waved his hand. "She will recognize the name," he stated, loftily.

At this confident assurance Simms unbent a trifle. Miss Philomena's charitable connections often had borne strange fruit. Perhaps this man was, in some incomprehensible way, important to his mistress's scheme of things. The

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butler stretched out his hand to take Mr. O'Connor's silk hat. Mr. O'Connor promptly snatched it away. Then, realizing too late that the wooden one's gesture had been hospitably meant, he fairly thrust it upon the butler, who fumbled the pass. The precious silk hat fell with a hollow thump to the floor. Both stooped to pick it up, with the embarrassing result that their heads met forcibly above it. Mr. O'Connor uttered a word which was distinctly not etiquette, but which, from a mere human standpoint, might be considered logical under the circumstances. The butler, with a smothered groan, backed rapidly into the hall, his hands pressed to his brow.

Mr. O'Connor sat down upon a brocaded chair and smoothed the ruffled plumage of his hired hat. So far his call had not been the social success he had planned. But with the Democratic party behind him, he would see it through, come what might. Incidentally he heaped anathema upon the wooden one, whose head seemed to have been made of the same stuff as the rest of him.

There was a further period of waiting, during which Mr. O'Connor drew up the rough sketch of his sartorial apology. Then down the stairs

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came a lady in rustling silks, a lady who smiled and held out to him a hand whiter than Mr. O'Connor had ever dreamed a hand could be.

"It's little Maggie's father, isn't it?"

Mr. O'Connor rose from his chair and, mindful of a line in the *Gents' Etiquette*, took Miss Philomena's hand in the tips of his blundering fingers, raised it to the height of the lady's chin, wagged it weakly, and then—dropped it.

"Terrence O'Connor, ma'am, at your service."

That much, at least, had been strictly according to the rule.

"I am very glad to meet you," said Miss Philomena. "Won't you come into the library?"

"Pleased to meet *you*," said Mr. O'Connor, following her on tiptoe. (These social formulæ were really quite simple, once you got into the swing of them!) Miss Philomena sank gracefully into a chair. Mr. O'Connor lowered himself carefully to the extreme edge of another, placed his hat on his knees, and fished wildly for the sartorial apology. Somehow it seemed to have escaped him.

"Warm weather we're havin'," said Mr. O'Connor.

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Miss Philomena did not reply. Her gaze had fallen, by chance, upon Mr. O'Connor's shoes, and there was no speech in her. The *Gents' Etiquette* had said that the boots of the blessed should be black with tan uppers. Mr. O'Connor, following the hint, had had the lower half of his footgear polished the conventional black, the upper half a rich russet. The effect was something in the way of a departure for footgear.

"I feel the heat somethin' fierce," said Mr. O'Connor. Miss Philomena, with an exclamation of sympathy, rose and rang for Simms. When that dignitary appeared, with slightly discolored forehead, she ordered iced tea for two.

"I would have wore my swallow-tail," said Mr. O'Connor, nodding toward the receding Simms, "only I lent it to a friend." The sartorial apology was out, at last, and well out, too. Miss Philomena bowed her head and murmured that she quite understood. So there was an embarrassing business happily concluded.

Tea arrived, and under its stimulating influence Mr. O'Connor found that discourse with a lady was not the difficult matter he had supposed. Nobly he thanked Miss Philomena

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for her kindness toward the small stranger who had cried upon her door-step. Miss Philomena responded by asking for details of little Maggie's progress. Mr. O'Connor reciprocated with inquiries for the King. Thus was provided that first necessity of social intercourse, a topic in common. Once met upon this ground, they fell to discussing the children's adventure. Mr. O'Connor was led to talk of the Alley, which he did with a certain rich imaginativeness of his own. He described its poverty in the very terms of that poverty; painted with unconscious pathos its underlying sadness, touched upon its need for a new life. And thus, in a most natural manner, he came to the purpose of his visit.

"Did ye read my card?" asked Mr. O'Connor.

"I—glanced at it."

Mr. O'Connor extended a generous handful of the pasteboards. It had been especially impressed upon him by the *Social Guide* that he should not be niggardly with his calling-cards.

"Read what it says," he suggested, modestly.

"'In God we Trust,'" read Miss Philomena, with some bewilderment.

"I mean—over the name, ma'am." Mr. O'Connor leaned forward and placed an obliterating forefinger upon the spot.

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"Oh, I see. 'Democratic Candidate for Alderman.' . . . You, Mr. O'Connor?"

"The same," said Mr. O'Connor.

"I congratulate you," replied Miss Philomena, smiling and making him a little bow.

Mr. O'Connor fumbled the silk hat in his great hands.

"I guess ye're wonderin' why I came, ma'am?"

"To see me, I hope, Mr. O'Connor?"

"I came," said Mr. O'Connor, desperately, "to ask ye to indorse me for Alderman."

"I? Indorse you?"

Mr. O'Connor, being at a loss for words, tossed his hat into the air and caught it dexterously. After which he looked at Miss Philomena and nodded.

"I'm afraid I don't understand."

"Very few does, ma'am," said Mr. O'Connor, reassuringly. "It's politics." Then, bending forward until the knees of the rented trousers creaked under the strain, Mr. O'Connor explained the identity of their respective causes.

"I see by the paper," he said, "that ye are in favor of reformin' the slums. More sunshine and good air! More parks for the childer to play in—"

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"Yes," said Miss Philomena, with sudden interest.

Mr. O'Connor waved his hand. "'Tis me platform."

"Your platform?"

"The same, ma'am."

"You mean—that if you are elected Alderman you will work for these reforms?"

"I will."

"And you think that I could help you?"

"I do, ma'am."

"In just what way?"

"By writin' a letter to the papers, ma'am, indorsin' me for Alderman. That would give me the backin' of all the charity sw—people, ma'am, and in politics 'tis the backin' elects the man."

"Then tell me what to say," cried Miss Philomena, "and I'll say it!"

Mr. O'Connor seized the white hand held out to him, and this time, etiquette forgot, he shook it heartily.

"Ye're a gentleman," said Mr. O'Connor.

Miss Philomena blushed at this generous compliment. Then, moved by a new enthusiasm, she went to her writing-desk and selected a sheet of monogrammed note-paper.

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"There's no time like the present, Mr. O'Connor. How shall we begin?"

The Statesman walked on tiptoe to Miss Philomena's side and there stood drumming his hat in an excessive embarrassment of modesty.

"Ye might say," suggested Mr. O'Connor, staring at the ceiling, "ye might say as how I'm a voice in the wilderness!"

XXIV

THE KING SITS UP TO LICK STAMPS, AND THE
DOCTOR BRINGS IN THE PAPERS

IT was a day late in Autumn when the King climbed his final mountain to the dizzy peak of Sitting Up. Behind him lay the Land of the Checkered Quilt, all that dim country of the Sick-Abed children which stretches from Pills to Patagonia. But there was no trace, now, of the shadowy Valley upon whose edge the King had taken his journey. He sat by the Play-room window, engaged in the pleasant and interesting occupation of licking stamps. A grate fire crackled cheerily upon the white-tile hearth. Miss Philomena sat near by, a small stand at her side, and upon the stand a pile of envelopes and beautiful engraved cards, which read:

Miss Van Zandt
requests the pleasure of

_____’s

Company at a Thanksgiving Dinner
on Thursday, the twenty-fourth of November,
at one o’clock.

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It was Miss Philomena's task to fill in the blank line with the name of the guest, and to address the invitations. It was the King's duty and privilege to lick the stamps and affix them by a series of vigorous thumps to the snowy envelopes.

"Dear me!" said Miss Philomena, with a laugh. "I've been writing for ten minutes and I haven't finished yet with the O'Connors. What a wonderful family they must be!"

The King removed a stamp from the tip of his tongue. "When are you going to marry the Doctor?" he asked.

"Very soon, your Majesty."

"Would you mind," said the King, "having as many children as the O'Connors?"

Miss Philomena bent her head above the envelopes. "I'll try," she answered, humbly.

"If you could have mostly boys," suggested the King, "it would make a peach of an army!"

So it was agreed that Miss Philomena was to have mostly boys, and, that point settled, they went back to their tasks with a new understanding. But suddenly the King's face clouded. He paused, his fist uplifted to smite a stamp, and glanced at Miss Philomena.

"Will little Maggie" (thump) "be well

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enough" (thump) "to come to the party?" (thump, thump).

"The Doctor won't promise," replied Miss Philomena, as though she considered it most reprehensible of him. "We'll simply have to wait and see."

"If he don't let her come," said the King, "I'll—I'll *do* somethin' to him."

This vague threat seemed so much more ominous than a definite statement of vengeance that the King let it stand, turning it over in his mind with gloomy satisfaction. Several plans occurred to him for bringing the Doctor to terms—each more awful than the last, so that before the working-hour was up he had quite regained his cheerfulness.

Within that hour invitations were duly inscribed and addressed to the O'Connors, the Goronivinskys, the Graziolas, the two Fogarty girls (who were certain to come in pink gingham), the Farinas, the six Maxmans, Benny Ernspicker, Yetta Horowitz, the Costellos, the Einsteins, the Murphys, and the Schmidts. This list had been compiled by the versatile Doctor, who, after a clever bit of detective work, had obtained the names of the King's citizens, and—*mirable dictu!*—the spelling of those names.

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But for all his cleverness there had been one name which he had not been able to discover. Hence, when Miss Philomena reached the end of her list she found herself in something of a quandary. For it would never do to say that Miss Van Zandt requested the pleasure of a Bad Woman's company at Thanksgiving dinner!

"I think I shall have to write her a note," observed Miss Philomena, at last, "and ask the Doctor to deliver it."

This plan having met with the approval of the King, Miss Philomena wrote the Bad Woman a kind and friendly and altogether beautiful note, which she folded and placed in an unaddressed envelope. As she did so the thought occurred to her that names were not so necessary to social intercourse as she had once supposed.

At this point, the councils of state were interrupted by the entrance of Simms, who announced that Doctor MacLean had arrived and would be pleased to see Miss Philomena immediately. The Queen Regent arose, with a word of apology to the King, and descended the stairs.

The Doctor stood in the center of the library,

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scowling and grumbling, like a pent volcano, his arms fairly loaded with newspapers. More newspapers bulged from his pockets. Still others lay scattered about the floor. Miss Philomena, coming suddenly upon this scene from the outer hall, paused in dismay.

"Peter! What are you doing with all those papers?"

"I'm collecting 'em."

"Please don't look like a Prussian! What have I done?"

"Done?" roared the Doctor. "You've got your name into every paper in town."

With a grim chuckle he began to spread out his journals upon the table, opening them one by one.

"Look at this: 'Candidate for Alderman Indorsed by Society Woman.'—'O'Connor backed by United Charities Head.'—'Miss Van Zandt Advises East Side to Vote for O'Connor.'—'O'Connor Now Sure of Election.'—'Would Paint City Green'—a congenial task for an Irishman! There's something in every one of them."

"Oh," cried Miss Philomena, "*it worked!*"

The Doctor glanced at her in mock despair. "So it was a plot, eh?"

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Miss Philomena put her hands upon the Doctor's shoulders and forced him into a chair; then sat upon the arm of it.

"Some time ago," she said, "I received a call from a gentleman, a most premeditated and gorgeous call. Oh, Peter, if you could have seen him! He came in an open coach that I am sure is a funeral carriage in its lighter moments, and he—he apologized for not wearing a dress coat!"

"Humph!" said the Doctor. "Did he ask you to indorse him?"

Miss Philomena nodded. "He said it would help him, and it seemed such a little thing. You really don't mind, do you, Peter?"

"Lord bless you, no! If he means what he says, I'll back him myself. As a matter of fact, I've already dropped a hint to an editor friend of mine."

"Peter! You fraud!"

The Doctor chuckled. "Why not? This fellow O'Connor is advocating the very reforms of our immortal Resolution. And, after all, he's little Maggie's father—and an Alderman's salary is two thousand a year."

Miss Philomena raised the Doctor's hand to her lips. "You utter fraud!"

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There was a brief interlude in which Miss Philomena did not sit upon the arm of the chair. . . .

"Peter?"

"Eh?"

"I've been thinking of my neighbors—and I've decided that we humans are very near to one another, in spite of all the seeming differences."

"By Jove! You are learning."

"Yes, I am. But I want to learn more. I want to go on learning all my life, and you must help me. I used to believe that people born as I was born and who had lived as I have lived were divinely set apart from—the others. But I know now that we are all bound by the same thread, and that we must work together if any good is to come of us."

"I had hoped that you would see that, some day."

"It was a child who made me see."

"It very often is."

"And without knowing, I have an idea that poor, funny Mr. O'Connor was inspired in the same way about his platform."

The Doctor did not reply. Instead he pointed to a certain column in a certain newspaper.

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"Read that," said the Doctor, brusquely.

Miss Philomena took the paper, glanced at the print, and then gave a little cry. "How did they ever—?"

"Newspaper reporters," said the Doctor, "are sharp-eared young geniuses. And O'Connor's Alley has a long tongue."

"It's well written!"

Miss Philomena bent over the page, fascinated, compelled by the story printed there. It was the story of a boy King who had set out with a sword and a pocketful of pennies to wrest a kingdom from the stony wilderness of the town.

Very simply, but with a rare humor that lay nearer tears than laughter, it told of the King's adventure. . . . Then, having fetched a blind-
ing moisture to Miss Philomena's eyes, it went on to draw a portrait of Mr. Terrence O'Connor, in shiny frock-coat, standing upon a platform of air and pledging impossible Utopias to a constituency in rags. And at the very end, by a deft twist of phrase, it turned that somewhat ironic portrait into the shining image of a Sage and a Seer, so that the reader's mind was left with two confused impressions, like a negative doubly exposed. One was unmistakably

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Mr. O'Connor. The other was the likeness of a Prophet in the Wilderness; the very Prophet whose rôle Mr. O'Connor had assumed in furtherance of Mr. Fogarty's political scheming.

And so, [continued the story], if Utopia is ever found in the vicinity of O'Connor's Alley, the miracle will be due, primarily, to the dream of a boy King who, according to reliable information, believes in Fairy-tales, and who now lies mending of his hurt in a window above the green country, like a soldier come home from the wars—

The paper fell to the floor. Miss Philomena was crying against the Doctor's shoulder. "Oh, Peter, Peter! I must do what I can for him now. I must help him to find his kingdom—"

"It's out there," said the Doctor, nodding toward the window. "Out there, waiting for him."

But Miss Philomena would not be comforted. "How can he make a kingdom of that? It's kept fast under lock and key! And if we opened the gates, the whole city would come in and trample it to death. That would be worse than no kingdom at all!"

"You're right," said the Doctor. "We can't take down these particular fences. There are some things that are worth framing and setting aside, merely for the beauty that is in them."

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I hope that we may always keep this little Park as it is, for a sample of the Creator's handiwork. Men have carried the memory of a garden in their hearts for centuries. It is the world's dream to go back some day to that garden, if not by one road, then by another. Hence it behooves us to guard what beauty we have, so that we shall not forget. . . .

"But we must not guard it selfishly, we who have the keys! We must hold it in trust for all the others, as a symbol and a pledge. And for every fence we put around it, we must tear down some protection of hideousness in the city beyond!"

He led Miss Philomena to the window that fronted the quiet Square, and together they looked out upon the King's country, aflame now with the last glory of the year.

"That was the color of God's earth," said the Doctor, "before men built their cities on it. Pray God we may come back to it, keeping the cities, if need be, but building them nearer to the intended plan—"

Miss Philomena turned suddenly and faced him, her hands clenched at her sides. "I have said things like that," she cried. "In this past month I have said many things like that, to

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myself and to others; beautiful, splendid-sounding things! But, oh Peter, are they true? Can we ever build the world again?"

He took her hands, and looked long into her eyes. "I do not know," he said. "But I do know that we can try. And that, in itself, is a fine adventure!"

XXV

AT THE END OF A STREET

IN her room above the unmentionable byway the Bad Woman sat-forging a Cardboard Crown. It was a shining task, and as she cut and trimmed and pasted, she sang, unconsciously, such small, meaningless fragments as women sing in the twilight, when their hearts are breaking. . . .

*"Baby, baby, is it you
Peering in at me again?"*

The gaslight flickered in the draughts that pierced the room. The Autumn night had brought a chill wind to the street, and such defenses as the Bad Woman could muster against it were sadly insufficient. But she continued her work, scarcely feeling the cold, until the Cardboard Crown stood all complete. She had covered it with a lumpy tinsel that glittered in the dimness like beaten gold. . . .

After a while she put it aside and took up a

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newspaper from the floor. But her hands shook so that the print ran together and she could not read. With a little shrug of her shoulders she rose and warmed her fingers at the sputtering flame of gas. The shadow of a great hand flickered momentarily upon the wall. She saw it and shuddered. . . .

Going back to her chair, she again picked up the newspaper and, smoothing it across her knees, read the story that she had read many times since morning. It was she who had given this story to the city. Under cover of the night, she had crept out to intercept the young reporter nosing in the Alley for news. He had sat in her room while she told him the story of the boy King; after which he had thanked her briefly and gone away.

"It is a good story," said the Bad Woman, nodding gravely. Then, with a sudden gesture, she lifted her arms and cried aloud, "I have done all that I can do!"

Some time later she put on her hat and coat, wrapped the glistening Crown in the newspaper, and turned out the light. At the door a blast of cold air smote her face. She gasped, like a swimmer facing the sea, and then plunged on down the familiar stairs.

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As she reached the sidewalk a man, muffled in a long overcoat, came striding through the hazy zone of a street lamp directly toward the door she had just quitted. Instinctively she crouched against the brick, hiding the Card-board Crown beneath her coat. The man entered the unlighted hallway, pausing on the threshold to strike a match. The stairs creaked loudly as he mounted them.

She stole back to the entrance and listened. Distinctly she heard the sound of a knock. A brief wait, and the knock was repeated, more vigorously. . . . Then another match flared, and the man came down, grumbling to himself. She stood, a shadow among shadows, watching him. As he passed once more beneath the street lamp she saw him thrust a white envelope into the pocket of his greatcoat.

Shivering, she waited until the darkness had hidden him. Then, feeling quite brave, she went on, smiling and singing her fragments of song. . . .

She walked westward, keeping well within the shadow of the ragged walls. There were but a few wayfarer's abroad, and these she avoided by accustomed small ruses. She had placed the Crown beneath her coat, to keep it safe from harm. . . .

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The street moaned with the wind. Stinging flakes of snow touched her cheek like little knives; but a strange numbness in her body dulled their dancing blades. . . .

A tree, almost naked, stood tossing against the sky. She saw the wet gleam of iron pickets marching in a yellow blur of light. She skirted the hem of the Park, her head bowed, one arm half lifted to shield her face. Once she stopped, and, seizing two of the pickets in her hands, shook them impotently, with wordless cries. Then, frightened by the sound of her own voice, she shrank away, glancing fearfully about her. But there was none to see her mad assault upon the iron barriers of Respectability. She crossed the street and began to peer for numbers. Twice she mounted strange and icy steps, only to scurry back again, like a wild thing. But at last she found the house. . . .

Standing in the vestibule, she drew forth the Cardboard Crown. The courage that had almost died out of her leaped up again. She rang the bell. The door opened. A man-servant stood peering into the black smother of the night.

She took a step forward, holding out to him her precious burden. A sudden fillip of wind

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caught the dragged end of the newspaper and stripped it from the thing of paste and tinsel. The man drew back, startled by the white face that smiled from the dark.

"Take it," said the woman, "it's a Crown, for him . . . for the little boy!"

She pressed it into his fumbling hands. For a moment they remained facing each other, the prim, horrified butler, the pale, drenched, unreasonably smiling woman.

"Say . . . the very good Bad Woman. Don't forget! And say . . . good-by."

She turned swiftly and stumbled down the steps, her hands over her ears to shut out the sound of that closing door. . . .

The snow was like a great white beast that came at her in a thousand shapes, disintegrating as it came. The wind beat her soaked garments flat against her burning flesh. But she got on, somehow, threading the maze of streets by instinct, like a blind hare. Suddenly, after ages of the cold and the wet, she found herself standing in the street opposite her own door, staring up at her blotted window. And as she looked, an overwhelming repugnance rose within her, sweeping her back and away from all that she had been. Her mind revolted at the thought

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of those hideous, creaking stairs, that empty mockery of a room. Then suddenly the horror passed. A miracle began in her soul; a radiance, a singing, a great, confused gaiety such as the chance wayfarer catches from the opened door of a lighted house. She stood listening, her head upon one side, as the wayfarer listens for the music and the laughter. . . .

She started forward again, in that listening attitude, her hands held out before her like the hands of a person who is blind. . . .

The street raveled out between buildings tall and dark; stopped short like a thing tired of its journey. She saw the black hulk of a barge and the dull gleam of the River beyond . . . and she went toward it, laughing and listening. . . .

Beneath her feet the huge barge groaned and trembled like a shaken world. She lifted her arms to the hidden heavens with a cry. "I have done all that I can do!"

And after that the River, moving imperturbably to the sea.

CHAPTER THE LAST

XXVI

IN WHICH ALL ENDS HAPPILY, AS EARTHLY
STORIES SHOULD

THE King was coming down the stairs. All through the house sped that happy bulletin, from cellar to garret, until the kitchen maids ran smilingly into the hall and the stout cook abandoned her pie-crust to peep from the butler's pantry. Even Simms, the wooden butler, exhibited a certain sprightliness at the news. He unbent so far as to wink at one of the maids, who swore afterward that she had seen a tear in his eye. But that was mere idle rumor.

The King himself was a sight for better than kitchen maids. He was clad in a black Eton jacket, white Starch-Collar, and dark gray trousers that reached quite to his ankles. His legs, which had developed a regrettable tendency to wobble, took new courage from these splendid garments of manhood. The Starch-

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Collar, it must be confessed, was a grievance to his neck; but he had promised to say nothing of it if Miss Philomena would permit him the trousers. So the bargain had been struck, and this Thanksgiving Day found him descending the stairs in man's attire—and an inexpressible happiness.

Before him marched a White-and-Blue Nurse, carrying rugs and pillows, for the King was to sit in an arm-chair by the window and there await the arrival of his guests. There was some secret about their coming, some mystery, which, try as he would, he could not wring from Miss Philomena and the Doctor. These two had formed a partnership against him, a partnership of winks and nods and portentous silences which added a tantalizing flavor to the joy of the day.

Behind him came Miss Philomena, bearing a Cardboard Crown, which, according to Simms, had been left at the door by a mad woman, the night of the great storm, a week ago. But both Miss Philomena and the King had known who was meant, and had despatched the Doctor a second time with the kind and friendly note. This time he had left it under the Bad Woman's door. . . .

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A strong light, beating through the windows of the somber library, laid a golden carpet half-way down the floor, and fell like a rich mantle over the King's chair. The whole front of the room was radiantly aglow, and even in the depths of it, where slept the accumulated dusk of years, shafts of sunlight struck unexpected tints from satin and luminous mahogany. There was no evidence of last week's storm. The world lay sparkling under a sapphire heaven!

Within the house were odors sweeter than the spice of Ind. A faint suggestion of roasting turkey floated upon the air, and a fragrance of mincemeat baking between brown crusts; of squash pies; of creamed potatoes; of sage, spice, and cranberry; of sauces, gravies, and garnishings! Through the half-opened door of the dining-room the King caught a glimpse of the long table with its gleaming silver, its spotless cloth, its mysterious favors tied with red ribbon, its banked flowers, its trimmings, decorations, and adornments. Ah! those beautiful Thanksgiving Day tables of our childhood! How white they were, how shining, how friendly with clustered chairs! What visions they bring to mind! What memories of vanished faces! They are of the stuff of dreams, those tables. Once their

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magic circle is broken, it can never be mended again.

The minutes dragged on lazy wings. The hands of the library clock, which could be brisk enough when pleasure begged them stay, moved now with an exasperating slowness. Time is a heartless fellow!

The King sat throned by the window, counting the laggard minutes as they passed and looking out at the little Park, asleep in the sun. The Blue-and-White Nurse, having arranged and rearranged the pillows, tiptoed softly from the room. Then Miss Philomena knelt down and, placing the crown upon his head, kissed him. Following this brief ceremony there began a conversation which, with slight variations, had occurred a dozen times that morning.

"What time is it now?" asked the King.

"A quarter to one, your Majesty."

Silence.

"Are they *all* comin'?"

"Yes, your Majesty."

Silence.

"Are Mr. and Mrs. O'Connor comin'?"

"Yes, your Majesty."

Silence.

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"Is Mr. O'Connor elected now?"

"Yes, your Majesty."

A long silence.

"Is Maggie O'Connor—"

But this time the all-important question was neither asked, answered, nor evaded. For at that moment, out of the murmur of the day's voices, there came the unmistakable low beat of a drum, sounding its rhythmic thunder:

A-rub-a-dub-dub. A-rub-a-dub-dub!

The King sat erect in his chair. "What's that?" he asked, with a little indrawn breath.

Miss Philomena feigned indifference. "It sounds like a parade," she said, carelessly.

The sound grew louder. Now was heard a faint, breathy music, not unlike the shrilling of a First-Hand Harmonica. The King pressed his face against the window, entirely disregarding the cost to his nose.

And then, across the Square, he saw them coming, two by two . . . Mickey and his men!

A-rub-a-dub-dub! A-rub-a-dub-dub! Tra, la, la, la, la.

Play now, O Bandsmen, and march your bravest, O Ranks, for yonder in the window stands the King, crowned with a priceless Crown, and his eyes are shining for pride of you!

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As though in response to this unspoken appeal the Band redoubled its efforts. The Army wheeled at the turn of the Square and, after some debate among the files, executed a triumphant column left that brought it fairly beneath the King's window. Bravo the wooden swords!

A-rub-a-dub-dub! A-rub-a-dub-dub!

On they came, with beaming countenances, nor could discipline prevent a certain quickening of the step as they neared the goal of their ravished imaginings. But what a changed company was this! For, instead of ragged jacket and bare brown foot was now displayed an extravagance of starch, a profusion of neatly patched garments, a reckless glistening of shoe leather!

"Mickey Flynn's got a collar on!"

It was true. Mickey Flynn would have been the first to confess his gear. He wore a collar which might have graced the necks of emperors; a standing collar with wings that made it almost a flying collar; a collar three sizes too large and a size too tall, but a distinguished, dazzling collar, for all that!

Benny Ernspicker was brave in a coat with satin facings; a coat that sagged loosely from his shoulders to his thin calves and interfered

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materially with his progress. It was so long, indeed, that he was forced to hold up the skirt of it with one hand, while grasping the Harmonica with the other. Only the thought of his shiny lapels could have reconciled him to this obvious superfluity of covering.

Heinie Schmidt wore a blue sailor-suit that threatened to give up the struggle of containing his stout body at any moment. Aware of this cowardly weakening, he marched with mincing steps, conserving his raiment for the further strain soon to be put upon it.

The Fogarty girls had come in pink gingham, as was their wont. Susie Costello was a rainbow of ribbons and sashes. Sadie Goronivinsky, for once relieved of the infant Goronivinsky, walked beneath the spreading splendor of a silk umbrella which had been devastated by unknown gales, rescued from the ash-heap, and repaired for use as a lady's parasol.

The Graziolas wore white kid shoes, with red stockings. There was color a-plenty, and no supercilious concealment of it, either; for, though the month was November, there were few overcoats in the ranks. How the ribbons fluttered! How the colors blazed! How the best shoes twinkled in the sun!

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Behind the Army, constituting a sort of dignified rear guard, rolled an open coach, whose graceful flowing lines were accented by streamers of red-white-and-blue bunting. This stately carriage was occupied by a newly elected Alderman and his lady; she in flowered calico, with a black bonnet tied by strings beneath her chin; he in frock-coat, gray trousers, and high silk hat. . . .

Now the front files halted opposite the house. Captain Mickey turned and shrieked a long-contemplated command. The line wheeled in unison—oh, hours of practice eminently justified—proud eyes smiled up at the King, who clapped his hands and whistled in impotent ecstasy. Mickey Flynn shrieked once more, and the wooden swords leaped in salute!

Then, with a shout that rang through the Square, O'Connor's Alley broke ranks and came pell-mell up the steps, laughing, crowding, stumbling, pushing—an excited company that stormed the vestibule and utterly routed the precise Simms, who had aged these latter days.

At the height of the clamor the decorated chariot drew up, with a ringing, "Whoa, there!" from the driver (who was bound to add the voice of a Republican to the Democratic up-

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roar). Mr. O'Connor descended, and with a great display of etiquette assisted Mrs. O'Connor to alight. She clung to his arm, smiling and trembling, and was lost in admiration of her lord when Mr. O'Connor condescendingly shook hands with the weak and gasping Simms.

The King had turned from his window, and so did not see the taxicab that came bustling up to the curb a moment later. But Miss Philomena saw, and waved her handkerchief in welcome. . . .

The library door was filled with sudden faces. The King had a bewildering impression of Mickey Flynn's collar, of Susie Costello's ribbons, of the Graziolas' red stockings, of Heinie Schmidt's distended small-clothes, of Benny Ernspicker holding up his coat, of Mr. O'Connor beaming above the throng, of Mrs. O'Connor clinging to his arm and crying. . . .

The front door slammed. Mrs. O'Connor's sobs became distinctly audible. Then, at the very crest of the silence a footstep sounded in the hall and a great voice thundered:

"Her Majesty, the Queen!"

The crowd parted, and through a lane of hushed children came the tall Doctor with little Maggie O'Connor in his arms. Very gently he lowered her to the floor and stepped back. . . .

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They would never laugh at her again! For she was as God might have fashioned her in His hours of holiest creation, straight-limbed and flower-fair! All the laughter of the world was hers from that time henceforward, to be as the winds of heaven to the bird that is free!

She stood alone, just at the edge of the shadow, like a white butterfly come to rest. It was as though she feared to venture farther into the radiance of that day. Her quick glance searched the room with a startled wonder, a dawning glory . . . until at last she turned and saw the King.

He was leaning forward from his pillows, the make-believe Crown upon his head, the Autumn sunlight falling about him in a haze of gold. His eyes were fixed upon the slight figure of his First Citizen, and he was smiling as one smiles at the end of great adventures. . . .

For a moment they gazed at each other across that narrow, shining space—the cripple who had found her wings, the boy who had believed in Fairy-tales. Then, her face transfigured by a miracle of happiness, little Maggie walked slowly forward into the light.

THE END

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